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Research Study

Changing Soviet Perceptions of World Politics and the USSR's International Role

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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CHANGING SOVIET PERCEPTIONS OF WORLD
POLITICS AND THE USSR'S INTERNATIONAL ROLE

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NOTE: During the preparation of this study other CIA offices and the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, were consulted, but formal coordination was not sought. Comments will be welcomed by the author

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The final lesson of the Cuban Missile crisis is the importance of placing ourselves in the other country's shoes.

—Robert Kennedy

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Misperception has played an important role throughout the entire postwar period of US-USSR antagonism—in the opinion of some observers as important a role as actual conflicts of interest. Problems of perception will undoubtedly persist and perhaps even grow as the superpowers adapt to new international conditions and as world politics move increasingly in ways that differ from the familiar patterns of Cold War interaction. For example, it is by no means self-evident just what new opportunities or risks the Soviets perceive in such potentially momentous changes as their attainment of strategic military parity with the US.

The purpose of this study is to describe the current principal Soviet perceptions of the international political environment and of the Soviet role within it. To do this the study examines statements regarding foreign affairs made by the Soviet political leadership and by certain public commentators, especially the analysts of those academic institutes which focus their work on international affairs. While such statements are frequently intended to support current policy positions, they are nonetheless valuable in assessing Soviet perceptions of and attitudes toward international affairs. This material is supplemented by diplomatic and intelligence reporting of views expressed privately. These latter sources are particularly useful in helping to separate actual views from public rhetoric—a constant problem encountered in dealing with material laden with doctrinaire themes—and in assessing to what extent general ideological beliefs affect particular Soviet views.

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SYNOPSIS

A new note of Soviet self-confidence in international affairs, seen in Moscow as validating the concept of a progressive historical march, is emerging in the 1970s. Other major powers are not viewed as having changed their basically hostile attitudes toward the USSR, but the Soviets feel greater assurance about their capacity to deal with them and less exaggerated concern for their effects on Soviet security. Since insecurity has been a major factor motivating Soviet policies in the past it is not surprising that new directions in Soviet foreign policy have accompanied the new psychological mood. Moscow perceives a new need today for normalized relations with major states, especially the US, and has learned from experience that working within the existing international system is more likely to serve Soviet interests than frontal challenges to other great powers or to the system itself. Largely for this reason the Soviet leaders have developed an increased stake in international stability and have come to accept the prospect of an indefinite period of coexistence with the West.

Moscow still expects and seeks international change. But the USSR cannot, in a period of detente, be the direct agent for much of the change its leaders still hope will occur. And while a residual belief in the eventual attainment of ultimate Soviet aims in the basic world struggle still exists in the USSR, the Soviets have increasingly adjusted their sights, conceptually and operationally, to short-run and intermediate-range goals. Achievement of even these, the Soviets realize, depends on success in working with forces that often act independently of Soviet sway and in overcoming simultaneous countervailing trends.

Sources of Soviet Perceptions

Soviet ideology supplies the basic conceptual framework used by Soviet observers in analyzing international affairs. The interpretation of world events this ideology provides is dynamic: it posits a fundamental struggle on a global scale, presupposes constant change, and gives impetus to an activist foreign policy. Yet while Marxism-Leninism attunes Soviet observers to the key role that events *within* states play in affecting international behavior, it explains little beyond the general and abstract about relations *among* states. And although the Soviet outlook could be called utopian in terms of its stated goals, most Soviet leaders from 1917 onwards have consciously stressed realism and

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caution in practical policy matters and warned of the dangers of adventurism in the long-term international competition between the emerging new order and the declining old. In this regard, Brezhnev follows the examples of Lenin and Stalin rather than Khrushchev.

The wider Soviet involvement in recent years in world affairs and a belief that internal progress, especially toward economic goals, is increasingly dependent on international relationships have led Soviet leaders to seek a more accurate picture of the world. They have tried to enhance the capabilities of their channels of information about foreign events and, of particular note, to obtain more and better analysis of that information. A larger role has been assigned to the academic institutes in Moscow, especially the Institute of US and Canadian Studies and the Institute of the World Economy and International Relations, which are involved in providing policy-makers with estimative judgments about international affairs.

How deeply rooted the newer Soviet perceptions have become cannot be told with certainty. The current leaders lived through the Stalin era, with its articulate and heavily propagandized set of ideas stressing the hostility of the international environment, Soviet insecurity, and the necessity of avoiding foreign contact. This era has left deep and widespread Soviet doubts about the wisdom and orthodoxy of enmeshing the USSR in dealings with the capitalist powers and making compromises with the West. Yet despite the persisting influence of ingrained views, perceptions do not remain static. Doctrinally pure positions are possible only when events are viewed at a distance. Involvement with events requires that dogma make room for pragmatism, lest unrealism drive the Soviet state into an isolationist position. The post-Stalin generation of Soviet leaders has already changed its outlook in significant ways because of international experience, the influence of personal and institutional roles and interests, and newly perceived needs. A new generation of post-Brezhnev leaders could also develop new perceptions of international problems and new ideas of what Soviet national interests require in terms of international behavior.

The New International Situation

The measuring standard and key determinant of the USSR's progress in the worldwide political struggle postulated by the Soviets is the international "correlation of forces." In weighing the strengths of the two sides, the Soviets attach great importance to the power of the principal states, especially their economic and military capabilities and potential. But less tangible social and political factors are also

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considered to be important, hence the continual Soviet assessing of US domestic cohesion and willpower.

In the Soviet view the world since 1917 has been in gradual transition from a purely capitalist system to a socialist one, the most dramatic single advance being the Sovietization of East Europe after World War II. But the 1970s, the Soviets argue, have brought a further significant, even radical favorable change in the international balance. Some Soviet commentary seems to imply a tipping of the balance past a notional midway point, as though "socialism" now possessed more than half of a world power pie. The factor mainly responsible for the new correlation of forces, in Moscow's view, is Soviet strategic nuclear strength, built up over the last ten years to a level roughly equivalent to that of the US. Also contributing to Soviet optimism is the combination of economic, social, and political problems currently plaguing the West, which Moscow views as unprecedented. In Soviet eyes these problems have made the present phase of capitalism's "general crisis" unusually deep and persistent and have thrown the West into its most serious disarray since World War II.

The Soviets are unsure about what developments will flow from this "crisis," however, and realize that any relative advantages they now enjoy rest on an uncertain foundation. More pronounced leftward trends in West European politics (especially Communist participation in coalition governments in France and Italy) seem likely to them, but they also see in the present-day Western condition the seeds of possible civil wars and the specter of revived fascism. The Soviets apparently believe that capitalism cannot escape suffering permanent disabilities as a consequence of its problems and that it is already in a qualitatively new stage of its decline. But at the same time they have respect for the capacity of the capitalist system to devise effective methods for coping with even such serious problems as the oil issue and to bounce back because of the overall size and resiliency of the Western economic system.

The Soviets have also had difficulties in determining the meaning of the Western disarray for their own foreign policy. Some Party elements reportedly feel that not enough is being done to take advantage of the new international situation, and West European Communist parties are receiving conflicting signals from Moscow on just how best to improve their individual political positions. So far, however, in line with the Soviet propensity in the 1970s increasingly to dissociate the world revolutionary struggle from the ordinary conduct of interstate relations and place emphasis on the latter, the most authoritative Soviet expositions of the Western "crisis" have been more

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in the nature of efforts to steer the detente policy over the shoals of this unanticipated situation than justifications for revising course.

In no case has this been more clearly true than for Soviet relations with the US, which remain the key factor affecting the overall Soviet international role. In the 1970s the US moved toward detente with the USSR and accommodated itself to the growth of Soviet strategic forces and a Soviet role in resolving major world problems. Whether this "realistic" US attitude will be sustained is the chief question for Soviet policy-makers. The Soviets believe that the US altered its foreign outlook in the early 1970s largely for pragmatic reasons: the old policy was simply becoming less effective and too expensive. But the new US policy, the Soviets believe, rests on an unconsolidated domestic base; the consensus supporting earlier US policies has broken down, but no agreement has yet been reached on what should take its place. The Soviet reading of the situation in the US throughout the 1975 "pause" in detente has been that the pro-detente forces are still more powerful than their enemies, but that the latter remain strong, still tapping a reservoir of anti-Soviet feelings not yet completely dissipated from the Cold War.

The newfound Soviet confidence is not free from counterbalancing factors, and Moscow does not see the shifts in the international "correlation of forces" wholly one-sidedly. For one thing, the favorable changes that have occurred in the 1970s are not irrevocable. In this critical regard they differ from postwar Soviet gains in East Europe, which are judged to be "irreversible." Even the lengthy and expensive Soviet nuclear missile buildup does not guarantee future strategic stability or even parity.

Moscow is also clearly aware of the storm clouds on its international horizon. Chief among them is China, whose "loss" greatly damaged the USSR's image as the nucleus of an ever-increasing international political movement and whose deep-seated hostility threatens to outlive Mao. But Europe too, the recent collective security agreement notwithstanding, contains a self-assured West Germany and has shown little susceptibility to increases in Soviet influence despite spells of political turmoil and lessened fears of the Soviet military threat. The emergence of several secondary power centers in the world is welcomed by Moscow as representing a decline in US authority among its chief partners, but the Soviets are uneasy about what direction these newly independent political forces will take. While the Soviet perception of the world as enemy is changing, it has not been replaced by one of the world as oyster, ripe with opportunities to be exploited.

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The Soviet International Role

Soviet policy today is informed by a sense of "having arrived" internationally. By successfully weathering critical trials over the years, the Soviets believe that the USSR has demonstrated a capacity to sustain itself and grow in a dangerous and unpredictable international environment. There is also considerable national pride connected with the Soviet international role that is important to a people whose sense of inferiority *vis-à-vis* other great powers and cultures has been great and to a regime in need of evidence of its own competence and legitimacy. The Soviets feel that their international prestige is more solidly based today than was the case under Khrushchev, whose incautious political moves aroused rather than impressed adversaries and bought little influence in other countries. A stronger and more secure USSR does not guarantee success in all foreign undertakings, but it does mean a more active and influential Soviet international presence.

Current Soviet perceptions of world affairs, however, imply a degree of instability for Soviet policy. Although political changes such as those in southern Europe, from Turkey to Portugal, tempt Moscow to see and act on opportunities for Soviet advantage, the Soviet leaders are aware that greater militancy would damage their relations with the West without assuring any expansion of Soviet influence. While the Soviets are prepared to intervene abroad in areas and on occasions when they think the political and military risks are justified—as seems to be the case in Angola—they must continuously reassess the costs involved. In the rest of the 1970s and beyond the USSR may find itself even more subject to the strains inherent in its contradictory international roles: how effectively can it continue to represent itself as revolutionary, progressive, and the patron of the have-nots of this world while seeking expanded friendship with the US, recognition as a rich and advanced country, and stability in certain regimes and regions? There will probably continue to be a strong Soviet attitude in favor of keeping relations with the US and other major powers on a reasonably even keel, despite inevitable ups and downs. But mutuality of interest and viewpoint between East and West has long been anathema in the USSR, and reaching genuine compromises with the West will never be an easy or a natural process for Soviet leaders.

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DISCUSSION

I. PROBLEMS IN THE STUDY OF PERCEPTIONS

A. The Importance of Perceptions in Policy-making

Perceptions of the outside world are important elements underlying the policies adopted by any national leadership. The judgments political leaders make about the capabilities, intentions, interests, current policy objectives, and decision-making processes of other countries are often critical factors affecting the entire range of national foreign policy-making activities: what objectives to pursue, what means should be employed, what plan seems best, what reactions to expect, etc. Indeed, some scholars believe that perceptions are almost as important in international relations as objective reality.¹ After all, the interpretation of reality that any observer carries in his head is reality to him, however partially and imperfectly it may be drawn from actual facts.

Policies can often be correlated to the perceptions that condition (but do not necessarily determine) them. An example of this in Soviet foreign policy is the contrast between the predominant view of the US held in Moscow during Stalin's last years and that which emerged under Khrushchev. In the most frigid Cold War period the US was held to be an implacably hostile adversary. Soviet policies reflected little expectation of reaching any meeting of minds or undertaking cooperative actions with the US, and diplomacy between the two states was limited to frosty negotiations to settle issues left unresolved at the end of the war. With Khrushchev, however, a new image of the US emerged. "Sober" realists were perceived as exercising greater influence over US policies, and with them a new American willingness to accommodate at least some Soviet interests (e.g. control over East Europe, the building of a strategic nuclear capability) was discerned. Soviet policies accordingly turned to expanding areas of cooperation as mutual interests were articulated and emphasized.

Apart from this broad relationship, however, the links between perceptions and policies are often

difficult to describe. Causation, or even determining which occurs first, policy change or new perceptions, is especially complicated. In the example just given, it can be argued that Soviet policies on major issues shifted relatively soon after Stalin's death (in 1954-55) and *before* the basic Soviet perception of the US had changed appreciably. It can also be argued that the US-USSR relationship could not warm up very much or for a sustained period until the Soviet perception of the US had shifted. In either case, however, the main point is that perceptions and policies cannot get very far out of line with each other.

Because perceptions and policies correlate, it is not surprising that competing perceptions play an important role in policy debates:

Individuals and organizations seek to secure acceptance of perceptions that favor their own preferences for Soviet policy and undermine the opponents' arguments.

The more moderate image of the US associated with Khrushchev, for example, was not without challenge. Also voiced in Moscow was an alternative perception that stressed continuing elements of American hostility toward the Soviet system, its proponents cautioning that the "nature of imperialism" had not changed. This occurred in a period of debate over a cluster of Soviet national security policies that coincided with international negotiations about the nuclear test ban question. Owing to the uncertainties inherent in the international environment, differing plausible intelligence pictures of the world can easily be constructed to be used as weapons in debate.

B. Soviet Recognition of Misperception as a Problem

The Soviets have given little indication that they regard perceptions as being, in themselves, key determinants of a nation's policies or misperception as being an important problem in interstate communication.

Georgy Arbatov, head of the Institute of US and Canadian Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences, has discussed the susceptibility of perceptions,

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images, and intentions to misinterpretation and ambiguity—and the heightened importance of this problem in the nuclear age—with American officials. "He indicated at one time that his institute might do some work in this area. Nothing has surfaced, however, and the staffer whom he mentioned as possibly working on this problem has left the institute."

C. The Influence of Preconceptions on Perceptions

Perceptions are usually thought of as what is sensed or received as information about the environment. But how events are interpreted (and, for that matter, which events receive attention at all) depends not only upon outside stimuli; it is affected also by what is already believed in the mind.¹ Thus, what are normally considered to be perceptions are in part derived from already existing conceptions, or preconceptions. There are no "pure" perceptions in the sense of uninterpreted or objective representations of external events.

Soviet perceptions of the world outside the USSR are affected by several kinds of preconceptions. One kind is the body of fundamental assumptions or beliefs about the world (international politics, the process of historical change, the sources of wars, etc.) derived from Leninist ideas that have long been accepted virtually as articles of faith. Another set of beliefs comes from accumulated past perceptions—the memories and lessons drawn from the nearly 60 years of international involvement experienced by the USSR. There are also psychological factors derived from cultural influences or political experiences that affect the thinking of Soviet observers of the international scene (including the top political leaders) by making them more or less suspicious, cautious, bold, persistent, etc.

These assumptions, lessons, and attitudes, in combination, obviously influence the formation of perceptions. They act as a lens through which information about the environment is passed. The relevant academic literature uses the concept "belief system" to describe this mix of preconceptions, and usually attributes to it a great, even governing influence on perceptions.² In effect, *how* one looks at things goes far toward determining *what* one sees.

D. Sources of Distortion

What kinds of inaccuracies flow from these preconceptions and the filtering process? First, there

is the problem of information selection. Information that does not fit easily into existing beliefs is likely to be ignored, given inadequate importance, or distorted. Thus a Soviet analyst who believes that the policies of the Communist Party in a colony are controlled by the Communist Party of the metropolitan country will tend to discount or not look for signs indicating that local reasons account for those policies.

A related problem, especially true of Soviet thinking, is that of projection. In projection, a subjective belief is taken to be objectively real. Thus a Soviet perception of much latent sympathy and support for the USSR among the factory workers of other countries may persist with little solid evidence to support it and even in the face of contradictory facts.

Values and objectives also can have a distorting effect on perceptions. Soviet preconceptions organize information about the outside world not only with respect to what is believed about the behavior of other states, but also with respect to conceptions of Soviet ideals and foreign policy aims. Perceptions of the world environment must, after all, be somehow related to Soviet interests. Thus if there is positive value seen in economic cooperation with the West, more attention will probably be paid, and greater influence attributed, to those elements on the other side willing to do business with the USSR.

Personal and institutional roles and interests also affect perceptions. For many years elements of the Soviet military establishment have generally had a perception of greater strategic threat from the US than have other parts of the Soviet political system because of their special responsibilities in countering it. There is probably working here also a confusion in assessment between what is a *possible* danger, in light of the enemy's capabilities, and what is a *probable* one, based on his likely intentions. This kind of correlation is not invariable, nor is it exclusive: some particularly dire outlooks regarding the US threat have come from non-military sources. But the influence of an organizational outlook can be an important factor affecting perceptions.

It should also be noted that perceptions, even distorted ones, can sometimes lead to changes in reality. In the early postwar years the Soviets greatly feared political unity in the West directed against the USSR. They sought to consolidate their control over lands they had occupied during the war before the West took steps to challenge Moscow's position there.

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By their acts in carrying this out, the Soviets helped to hasten and guarantee the emergence of the very unity they feared and to end their own hopes of additional advances elsewhere in Europe in the near term.

E. How Perceptions Change

As has been noted, preconceptions tend to admit for consideration information that confirms them and to block out contrary data. Thus, both preconceptions (especially basic views regarded as principles) and the perceptions they shape resist change.

Yet perceptions do change. In individuals this usually results from a gradual, cumulative process of feedback and occurs only when the underlying beliefs affecting perceptions have themselves changed. Actions based on a particular perception may not work out as expected, or perhaps a new perspective comes into play."

While some beliefs may become fixed in one's mind and mold perceptions for many years, experiences, roles, and other factors affecting personal development over time can alter perceptions significantly.

For nations, the coming to power of a new generation of leaders might bring the influence of new perceptions to policy problems. This factor may be said to have affected the change in the Soviet image of the US that occurred after Stalin's death and could affect the post-Brezhnev period. The coming new leadership in the USSR might be more truly called post-Stalinist in the sense that their basic attitudes are probably much more affected by the era of limited US-USSR cooperation than by the earlier period of unremitting mutual hostility. They might also hold somewhat different conceptions of Soviet national interests that could lead to new views of the world.

F. How Self-Image Affects Perceptions

Just as one holds at any time a set of beliefs and perceptions about the outside world, he also has an image of himself. This self-image can, and often does, affect his views of the outside world.

The Soviets portray the USSR as the most progressive state in the world, politically, socially, and economically, and its policies as supporting the interests of workers and peoples in all parts of the globe. This self-image underlies the mistaken Soviet belief about latent proletarian support of the USSR

cited above. As Niebuhr has pointed out, this kind of error introduces an element of unrealism, and thus a source of misperception, into a national outlook:

... nations, as individuals, tend to deceive themselves when they project a self-image to the world that obscures the dominant motives of foreign policy."

Self-deception can result from a confusion of the normative roles that Soviet leaders think the USSR *should* play in international affairs and the actual roles it *does* play. Unquestionably normative roles help to energize Soviet foreign policy and provide goals. But they can also get in the way of realistic assessments of how much influence the USSR actually wield, and what kinds of Soviet actions will be tolerated. Soviet leaders in 1917-1918 quickly discovered that they could not represent themselves as the vanguard of a revolutionary order and at the same time expect cooperation from existing regimes.* In the 1970s the USSR may find itself even more subject to the strains inherent in its contradictory multiple roles: how effectively can it continue to represent itself as revolutionary, progressive, and the patron of the "have-nots" of this world while seeking friendship with the US, recognition as a rich, advanced nation, and stability in certain regimes and regions?

Self-image also plays a key part in forming perceptions of enemies." To the extent Soviets actually believe that the USSR stands for virtuous positions, they are led also to believe that opposition to it must be driven by dark motives (e.g. "anti-communism," "anti-Sovietism"). This kind of self-righteousness probably affects leadership as well as public outlooks and is a basic obstacle to Soviet acceptance of normal international relationships.

II. THE SOVIET APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

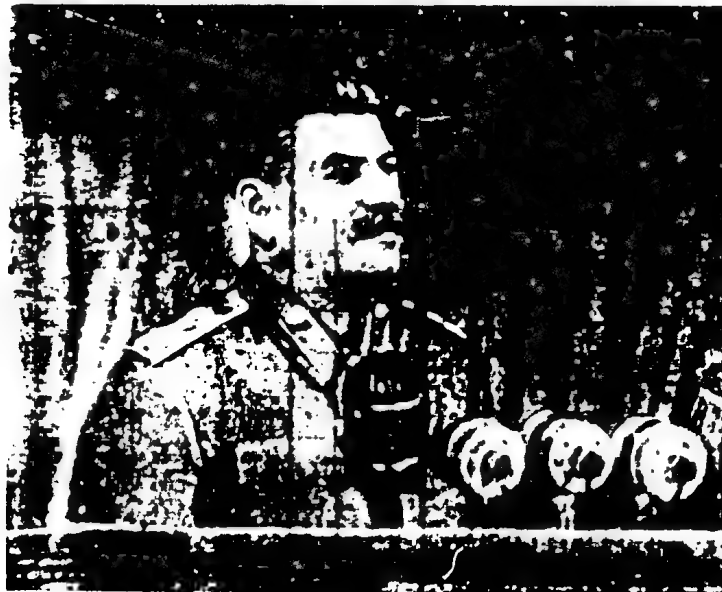
A. How Important is Ideology in Shaping the Soviet Outlook?

Ideology serves several functions in the USSR. It prescribes goals and some guidelines for actions to achieve them, and it is useful to the party in motivating the society to work and live within the

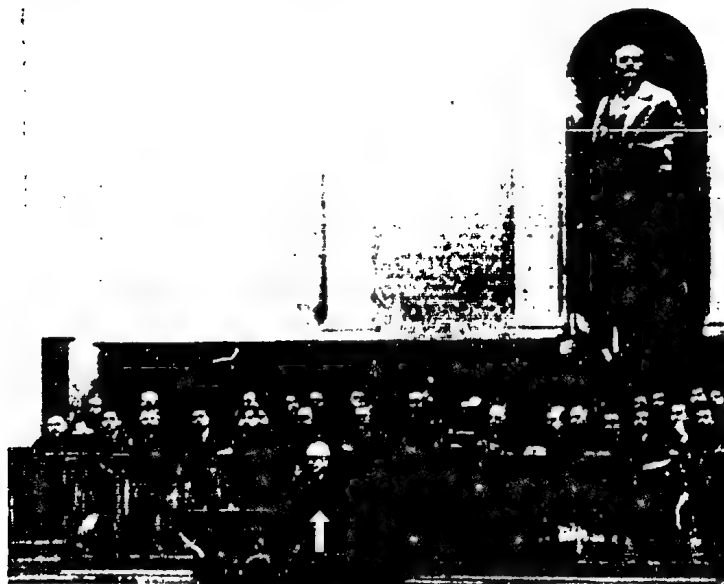
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Stalin, in his February 1946 election speech, tells Soviet citizens that the postwar international situation requires continued Soviet vigilance and belt-tightening.



Khrushchev, at the 20th CPSU Congress in 1956, outlines new foreign policy departures aimed at expanding Soviet activities and influence abroad.

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Brezhnev, at the 24th CPSU Congress in 1971, announces the "peace program" and heralds a new era of international detente.



The younger Soviet leaders—how much continuity of views in the next generation?

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bounds of orthodox behavior. But it has been no less important as an analytical key to Soviet understanding of the world.¹¹ In this role it affects the thinking of the political leaders as well as other groups.* The key questions are to what degree is this the case and whether the influence of ideology is waning with time.

It has been argued that ideology is especially important to the Soviets in dealing with foreign affairs.¹² The basic reasoning behind this judgment is that:

- ideology is less relevant at home than in the days of forced industrialization, both as a guide to policy and as a galvanizing force spurring extraordinary efforts, and new proof of its relevance and importance is sought abroad;
- in domestic affairs the contradictions between ideology and reality are apparent to all Soviets; there is less tangible experience involving the outside world and doctrine is still used there to fill in gaps in Soviet knowledge;
- since the international political environment is replete with ambiguous situations and conflicting data, the role of existing beliefs in organizing data and forming interpretations is enhanced.

But even if these general observations are accurate, they hardly prove that ideological preconceptions alone will determine Soviet perceptions of the world. Perhaps the most fundamental limitation on the influence of ideology upon perceptions is the general and abstract nature of that which Marxism-Leninism has to say about international affairs. Marxism is centered on a philosophical conception of mankind and on social phenomena occurring *within*, not among industrialized nations. Neither Marx nor Engels had anything at all to say about peaceful coexistence between socialist and capitalist states, now the central doctrinal and actual problem in Soviet foreign relations. Lenin applied the Marxist critique of capitalism to the international system in his *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, which is still the basic doctrinal text for the Soviet view of the world, and accounted for international phenomena such as economic imperialism and World War I as resulting from capitalism's projection of internal

contradictions onto the world scene. But only this monograph, some additional writings of his, and the actual policies of the Soviet state during its initial years before his death provide present-day Soviets with basic doctrinal guidance. As a result, Soviet ideology can guide Soviet interpretations of international events only in a broad sense. Much room is necessarily left for the other beliefs, experience, or current information to influence the construction of Soviet perceptions.

The analysis of official public Soviet documents (from party congresses) by Triska and Finley bears out this point. Doctrine is invoked more in discussions of broad trends, general expectations, and long-range planning. It has relatively "little operative significance in formulating Soviet short-range or crisis expectations differently from the expectations of a non-Marxist."¹³ Their data also bear out the proposition that doctrine affects the foreign affairs outlooks of those officials who deal extensively in foreign matters less than the foreign affairs outlooks of those who deal primarily with domestic issues.¹⁴

The general point underlying these findings is that the more one works on a subject, the less doctrine guides his judgments on that subject. Since foreign policy concerns are a growing part of the business of the top political leaders in the USSR, their outlooks and decisions on foreign affairs should logically reflect more the complexities of the growing number of practical problems that accompany increased international involvement and reflect less *a priori* doctrinal perspectives.* Doctrine may still be taken as a guide for the most basic motives of other states, but it cannot explain the details of another state's stance on specific issues. For that purpose specific data—and analysis of that data—are necessary. The longer-run and ideologically purer view of world affairs taken by Lenin from his desk in Switzerland prior to the revolution or by Trotsky in initially assessing the probable work of the fledgling Soviet foreign ministry ("I will issue a few revolutionary proclamations to the peoples of the world and then close up shop.") is simply not sufficient today.¹⁵ It cannot answer all the questions that arise from the large number of relationships that now involve the USSR.

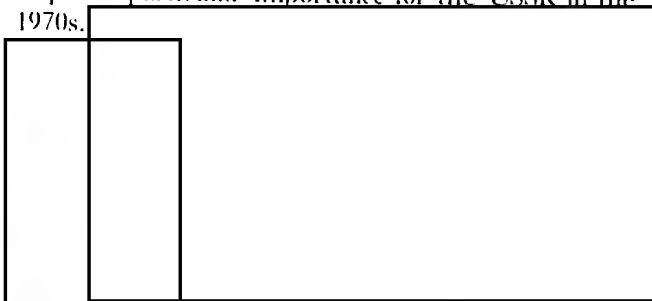
*Some observers believe that cynicism is the intellectual hallmark of high Soviet officials and that pragmatic, non-idealistic and careerist factors largely determine their views, including those on international affairs. Others point out that party bureaucrats are the most likely of all Soviets to retain doctrinaire views, or at least outlooks partly shaped by doctrine, because ideology is a principal element of their work and basis for their status.

*Indicators of growing involvement by the top leaders with foreign affairs include the establishment of Brezhnev's personal secretariat, which consists largely of foreign affairs experts, and the elevation of Andropov, Gromyko, and Grechko, all of whose organizations deal in large measure with foreign issues, to full membership in the Politburo in 1973.

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B. The New Importance of International Relations to the USSR

Soviet international involvement has grown in a number of ways: large programs of economic and military aid have become established, the merchant marine and naval presence abroad have increased enormously, diplomatic and economic representations abroad have expanded steadily, and detente has brought more extensive relations of all sorts with the major industrial powers. Thus it is not surprising that international relations are regarded as having acquired particular importance for the USSR in the 1970s.



However, even though today the USSR no longer faces an imminent threat to the survival of the regime, Soviet commentators argue that "today the significance of this issue, far from diminishing, has, on the contrary, increased."¹

A major aspect of the growth of the importance of international relations for the USSR is their impact on domestic affairs. The Soviets generally regard domestic affairs as very closely related to foreign affairs, and in the final analysis, more important. But Soviet writing shows that the intrusion of foreign events into Soviet domestic affairs has become more marked in recent years:

Marxist-Leninist theory starts from the assumption that the deepest roots of foreign policy should ultimately be sought in domestic policy. But it obviously does not follow that, in some concrete historical conditions, foreign policy cannot determine the principal directions of domestic policy or affect it substantially.

What does follow from the interconnection between foreign and domestic policy is that it would be quite wrong to ignore or underestimate this reaction of foreign policy on domestic policy. Today, when such problems as the struggle to avert another war have become immensely important and the historical contest of the two opposed social systems has become the main content of international relations, and consequently the center of gravity of worldwide class struggle is moving more and more into the international arena, the importance and role of foreign policy is also considerably growing. This explains why foreign policy and international relations have been of increasing importance in the activity of the CPSU and all the fraternal parties."

It is in fact the growing domestic impact of increasingly complex international events that has most concerned the Soviet leaders and led them in recent years to undertake an unprecedented Soviet involvement in external relationships. Trade with the West is seen as an important—though by no means controlling—factor in improving Soviet economic performance, and in effect, progress toward Communism within the USSR is viewed as increasingly dependent on the international situation. An example of a domestic ideological goal seen as affected by international events is the "withering away of the state." Soviet scholar Fyodor M. Burlatsky notes that, given an environment dominated from the outset by capitalist states, this goal "no longer depended on just the internal conditions, but also on the international situation." And, "today, too," he notes, it depends "to a large extent" on external factors.² This continuing need to deal with international affairs, he argues, means that those state organizations involved in foreign relations will have to continue to exist longer than those concerned with purely domestic matters.

C. Increased Study of International Affairs Needed

Given increased Soviet involvement abroad and the greater importance accorded international relations, it is not surprising that the Soviets have, in recent years, given more attention to the study of, and the need for additional information about, international relations, called by Suslov "the most complex sphere of our society."³ The most recent edition of the Soviet *Diplomatic Dictionary* has entries not found in previous editions on such subjects as "the theory of foreign policy," "the theory of foreign policy planning," and "the theory of international relations." In the section on "the theory of the collection and processing of foreign policy information," the editors plead for accuracy in foreign reporting as a necessary tool for the policy-makers:

The elaboration and adoption of rational foreign policy decisions can occur only when governmental and other organs taking these decisions receive correct information about the condition and trends of change and development in the international relations system."⁴

Another entry echoes Suslov's words by asserting that predicting foreign events is "one of the most complex

aspects" of prognostication and points out that the aim of estimating is

the increasing of the effectiveness of a given state's foreign policy, and the fullest use by it of the opportunities in an international situation for the attainment of its foreign policy goals.²²

Thus it can be seen that increasing the accuracy of one's view of the world is viewed as having an immediate and important impact on policy.

Both the need for more specific factual information and the need for its systematic analysis are noted by the Soviets. In 1972 a Soviet writer pointed out "the necessity of a careful analysis of every concrete international situation, of taking into account the various external and internal conditions of its development."²³ This same charge was placed on Soviet cadres serving abroad [redacted]

[redacted] urged that the Soviet representatives should think tactically, study more deeply, and do more analytical work on particular local situations.²⁴ [redacted]



Pyotr A. Abrasimov, former head of Central Committee Department for Cadres Abroad, now Ambassador to East Germany 25X1



Boris N. Ponomarev, Candidate Politburo Member, Central Committee Secretary in charge of the International Department.

[redacted] "what would be most fruitful for the study of the new phenomena is a systems analysis of the entire aggregate of international relations. . . ."²⁶ Implicit in these calls for more information and better analysis is the recognition that ideology does not—cannot—answer the immediate and pressing questions about current international relations.

D. The Role of the Institutes

A major source in recent years for this additional information and analysis about the outside world has been certain academic institutes. The principal ones are the Institute of the World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO, from its Russian initials), headed by Nikolay N. Inozemtsev, and the

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Nikolay N. Inozemtsev, Director, Institute of the World Economy and International Relations, USSR Academy of Sciences

Institute of the USA and Canada (IUSAC, from its English initials), headed by Georgy A. Arbatov. Each publishes a monthly journal. These journals, together with the monthly *International Affairs*, in which articles by foreign service officials often appear, provide the mainstream of Soviet commentary in depth on foreign affairs. In the institute journals in particular much of the discussion is conducted in relatively non-ideological terms and centers on the impact of "new factors," such as nuclear weapons, which sometimes involve mutual interests with the West and international cooperation. Thus it is important to consider how much influence institute-held viewpoints have in high political circles.

The very nature of influence in a non-regularized process that consists of occasional personal consultations, the submission of papers, and other less direct channels and methods of communication makes precise judgments impossible, and this would remain true even if substantially more was known about the process. But expert opinion from the institutes is increasingly sought by Soviet officialdom, including the

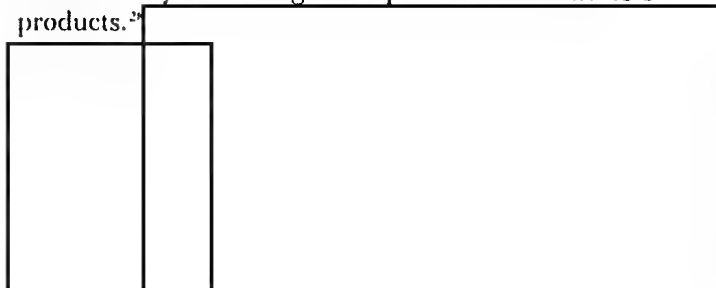


Georgy A. Arbatov, Director, Institute of US and Canadian Studies, USSR Academy of Sciences

politburo, and the institutes offer a primary means by which Soviet perceptions may gradually be made more accurate.

There is no evidence of the transmission from institutes to high policy officials of specific policy recommendations. In fact, institute analysts involved in long research projects and permitted extensive contact with foreigners usually find themselves purposely frozen out of the policy-making process.²⁷ But information, analysis, and estimative judgments produced by the institutes do reach important policy-makers. IMEMO prepares classified documents for policy officials, and this kind of work may well constitute by far the greater part of the institute's products.²⁸

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tapped to prepare a draft document for the 25th CPSU Congress (to be held beginning 24 February 1976) on the effects of the "scientific-technical revolution" on the USSR and the US.¹¹ In other cases the assessments may be more specific and more closely related to imminent policy decisions.

This kind of direct input of analysis to high levels is clearly the most influential role played by the institutes, and it seems to depend very much on the personal status of the institute heads.^{12*} Of course, the material they provide is just a part of the totality of inputs and existing preferences relating to foreign policy that operate as a Politburo member makes up his mind. In addition, the domestic considerations that a high official must weigh into the balance are not a part of institute-written analysis. But the basic detente policy line in recent years seems to correlate very well with what we know of Arbatov's views, both public and private, and [redacted]

[redacted] Arbatov has played an active part in the development of US-USSR relations and is by no means an ordinary research institute director.¹³

How accurately do public writings by institute commentators reflect what they prepare for policy officials? There is some indication that what is written for officials never sees daylight in the pages of the public journals, and in fact Western visitors in Moscow have been told not necessarily to believe that what appears under an author's name in an open article represents his actual view. On other occasions, however, foreign readers of the journals have discussed articles with authors and gained the impression that some of these pieces contained sincerely expressed views. It is probable that, while classified studies prepared in response to specific official requests may find little if any reflection in the open literature, generalized conceptions of the

*Western visitors have noted how proud institute staffers are of their director's importance and that they remind outsiders of evidence to that effect: Arbatov's membership on the Central Auditing Commission, his inclusion in the official 1973 Brezhnev entourage to the US, Inozemtsev's candidate membership on the Central Committee, and the recent election of both men to the Supreme Soviet for the first time. Apparently during French Socialist Party leader Mitterand's visit to Moscow in April 1975 Inozemtsev presented the Soviet view of the world crisis of capitalism. *The New York Times*, 8 May 1975.

international environment—apart from *pro forma* ideological views—can be relied upon as a reasonably accurate portrayal of beliefs held by the author. At least they seem to accord generally with what is learned in private discussions and are not contradicted by logical inferences drawn from Soviet policies.

It is likely that both Arbatov and Inozemtsev, in order to protect their personal and their institutes' roles, are careful not to give high-level consumers products that frontally challenge their known biases and interests.¹⁴

The views of most institute staff members, to the extent we know them, especially in IUSAC, are "moderate," although there is a sprinkling of dogmatists and radicals (there is reportedly a "sizable minority" who believe in the imminence of revolutionary outbreaks in the West).¹⁵ Such an image of the institutes may limit their influence among high policy officials, who are prone anyway to suspect the views of analysts whose main sources and contacts are Western. To the extent this may be true, the potential exists for a backlash against the institutes if the policy-makers come to believe that they have been oversold or if detente runs into serious problems. But, in this age of rapid international change and growing Soviet involvement abroad, the need of the political leadership for more analysis and estimative judgments about foreign affairs will persist, and the role of foreign affairs "experts," both academic and official, will probably continue to grow.

E. Are Soviet and Western Views of World Politics Converging?

A more informed and less simplistic view of the world on the part of the Soviets, one which accepts the coexistence of various kinds of states and welcomes the accommodation of conflicting interests (and not just the overcoming of those held by one side), would seem to be reasonably close to a typical Western outlook on international affairs. Soviet respect for the role of military power as a key factor in determining the course of international events (as well as the Soviet emphasis on building up Soviet military capabilities) seems also to fit in the European tradition of *Realpolitik*. Some observers have argued that Soviet views on world politics have in fact moved toward a closer approximation of Western views and that mutual perceptions and interests have emerged.¹⁶

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In dealing with problems related to nuclear weapons this has in fact been the case. Common perceptions of great danger in an uncontrolled arms race and continued high political tension can be abundantly documented for both the US and the USSR. Cooperation, even when forced by external events and undertaken by distrustful and antagonistic partners, does foster changes in thinking. The partners' concerns are included in one's own estimating and planning, and actions pursued together to advance common interests encourage trust. Certainly SALT continues the process of discussing and defining areas of common interest and outlook begun with the negotiations that resulted in the partial ban on nuclear testing in 1963, and nuclear proliferation is feared by both superpowers as a potential threat to their political position and even security.

In a sense nuclear arms control is a special problem that affects the bilateral superpower relationship in ways not applicable to other issues or to relations with other powers. Fruitful US-USSR negotiations on arms control continued throughout the Vietnam war when the bilateral relationship was otherwise uneventful and was the leading edge of improvement in relations after the hiatus caused in 1968 by the invasion of Czechoslovakia (although that invasion did set back the initiation of SALT by more than a year). But the more general Soviet policy of detente undertaken since the late 1960s heavily stresses the cooperative aspect of East-West relations over the competitive and is the embodiment of a Soviet willingness to accommodate conflicting interests and expand areas of mutual advantage, especially economic, but including political affairs as well.

This most recent "peaceful coexistence" campaign is a logical continuation of the post-Stalinist trend toward giving greater attention to common, overarching problems that affect *both* socialist and capitalist states and relatively less to the differences between them. An example of this trend is the basic Soviet attitude toward international law. E. A. Korovin, a prominent past Soviet expert on this subject, long argued that there were two separate systems of international law: the progressive socialist system and the unjust, outmoded capitalist. G. I. Tunkin, now the leading Soviet expert in the field, has argued for more than 20 years that there is one system that

encompasses both types of states and is based primarily on agreements between them. This law is called the law of peaceful coexistence. It obviously suits Khrushchev's and Brezhnev's policies better than the other view and has become the generally accepted Soviet approach to international law. Another example is increasing Soviet acceptance of international economic interdependence and division of labor within a single world economic system. There remain capitalist and socialist parts to this system, but massive inflation in the one is recognized to affect the other. The Soviets are careful to point out, however, that congruent international interests do not imply convergence of views or internal policies. Nor does it mean that *all* foreign policy issues will become matters of common interest; conflicting issues between states will continue to exist.

These changes in Soviet perceptions are important to note because they enhance the possibilities for a peaceful accommodation of interests between East and West. But it would be premature to conclude that the new views are irreversibly gaining ground in supplanting older outlooks that emphasized differences, fears, and hostility, or that the existence of some shared views is just the prelude to a further development of Soviet thinking along familiar Western lines. The Soviet historical experience has been different. The political history of the USSR provides a particular kind of background for Soviet politicians. The very fact of having lived through the Stalin years, under the influence of an organized, articulate, and heavily propagandized set of ideas stressing a hostile international environment, Soviet insecurity, and avoiding foreign contact, constitutes a considerable obstacle that even today causes widespread and deep Soviet doubts about the wisdom of enmeshing the USSR in international affairs and making compromises with the West. Mutuality between East and West *per se* has long been anathema in the USSR, where differences between the two kinds of political, social, and economic systems and the unique justice of Soviet views have always been intoned. Reaching compromises with the West is not an easy or natural process for Soviet leaders. Instead Moscow has sought to proselytize its views, reject those of other parties as unacceptable, and take political action to overcome opposing views and the groups that hold them. This "tension of opposites" is regarded by Moscow as the normal condition of world politics and is expected to end only with successful revolutions in other states. Thus many of the older

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ideological categories of discourse will no doubt continue to mark Soviet statements on international affairs, reflecting the hold of concepts developed in the Stalin years.* But the persistent, if somewhat intermittent attention to and elaboration of peaceful coexistence does indicate a willingness on the Soviet side to explore a way of accommodating conflicting interests in a manner that is more nearly acceptable to the West and less one-sidedly demanding.

There will continue to be problems of understanding between East and West. Misunderstandings of language, as in the instance of Khrushchev's "we will bury you" statement, are less likely now, but not impossible.** And lack of common understanding of concepts such as trust, which the Soviets say must come first in improving relations with the West while Westerners conceive of its gradual development as relations improve, will continue to dog negotiations. But Soviet perceptions of the world have now come far enough away from Stalin-era views to provide a basis for hopes that at least some areas of cooperation and lessened tension can be consolidated, accepted as a "normal" part of a mutually satisfactory status quo, and perhaps even gradually expanded. The overall Soviet view of the international scene is still much influenced by Marxism-Leninism, and "purer" ideological rhetoric can still be afforded in areas of less than pressing concern. But the Soviet perspective on the narrower subject of interstate relations has become more influenced by practical problems arising out of involvement with other nations. This latter outlook does seem now somewhat closer to the West European and American view than it was 20 years ago.

*Sidney Ploss believes that the traditional Bolshevik practice of thinking and writing about global developments in military terms is once again in vogue. "New Politics in Russia?" *Survey*, XIX, No. 4 (Autumn 1973), p. 35.

**In Russian the statement, though vivid in its imagery ("we will bury you" is an accurate translation literally), sounds much less dramatic and aggressive than it was popularly interpreted in the West. It was not intended to portray the USSR as acting directly and forcibly to cause the "death" of the US or the West. Its meaning is more accurately conveyed by a less literal translation: "we will still be around when you have passed away." It does, of course, even in this sense, reflect firm resolve and great faith in both the Soviet future and the West's eventual demise.

F. The Role of the Soviet State in International Relations

The original Bolshevik leaders who seized power in Russia in 1917 were immersed in beliefs and hopes about world revolution. They expected radical political changes to occur elsewhere, particularly in industrial countries, above all Germany. By and large they did *not* expect that the Soviet state itself would bring about these changes—although they did believe the Bolshevik example might show the way for others and they tried unsuccessfully in 1920 to exploit momentary military success to export revolution to Poland. They were more concerned with the international dangers they perceived threatening the survival of their experiment than with the use of their newly won state power to further the world revolutionary process. The establishment of the Communist International in 1919 was aimed, in fact, at creating a mechanism other than the state to implement Moscow's attempts to foster political changes in other countries.

Successive generations of Soviet political leaders have increasingly stressed the importance of the Soviet state and of interstate relationships. The state has become in effect the "supreme rallier" of Soviet interests.³⁸ In discussing the Central Committee decree of April 1973 on foreign policy, one Soviet writer notes that it "emphasized the active, engaging international policy of the CPSU that is based on the powerful force and prestige of the Soviet state, and on the support of all the people. . . ." (Emphasis added.) Soviet concern with the international image of the USSR has grown accordingly.⁴⁰ And for the sake of that image surprising Soviet concessions involving principle and domestic affairs have accompanied the detente policy of the 1970s.*

A concomitant change in the Soviet view of world politics is the increased acceptance of the international relations system more or less as it exists. The Soviet view of how international relations should

*For example, the handling of the Jewish emigration problem, including the desire to work something out regarding the Jackson amendment to the US trade bill. The eventual Soviet backlash on these matters demonstrates the limits of Soviet concessions, but does not invalidate the main point. In fact, it was Soviet concern over the growth of an image of a too pliable Kremlin that in part led to the backlash. The handling of domestic dissidents also betrays a sensitivity to international pressures and the USSR's image. Making detente-related concessions is not easy; they must sometimes be forced from a relatively high level on a reluctant bureaucracy.

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evolve has progressed through several stages: (1) a stateless world—the utopian, pre-revolutionary view of Marx and Lenin; (2) a world in which, as socialism triumphed in successive countries, states would either incorporate themselves into the USSR, federate into another version of the USSR, or replicate individually the Soviet model; and (3) the gradual advance of socialism to include additional independent states, gradually shifting the overall balance against capitalism.⁴¹ The current view is basically the Khrushchevian view, the last given above, but perhaps construed even more modestly. The USSR seems in many cases to be satisfied with, or at least to aim realistically at no more than an increase in the willingness of states outside the socialist community to support Soviet diplomatic efforts for organizing international affairs.

This perspective on international relations is practically devoid of ideological content and at variance with the traditional Marxist view that class interests are more important than traditionally conceived national interests. The Soviets have justified such an outlook by, in effect, disassociating the world revolutionary process from the ordinary conduct of interstate relations:

The ideological struggle, which is becoming increasingly exacerbated, must be clearly separated from the sphere of international relations between socialist countries and capitalist states, relations which are based on the principle of peaceful coexistence.⁴²

State-to-state relationships are a part of the larger inter-system conflict only in the sense that, at the present time, cooperative relations are seen as the best way to advance the socialist cause.

G. Changes in the Soviet Approach

Possibly as a consequence of increased involvement in and knowledge about international affairs, there does seem to be a clear Soviet emphasis on short-run issues and intermediate goals. Long-term Soviet goals remain unchanged, but they are treated as though their realization is highly unlikely and in effect pushed farther into the future. As one Soviet writer has put it, ultimate Soviet aims in the basic world struggle will eventually be achieved, but "meanwhile, it is the ups and downs of the struggle that *in the main* constitute the content of international affairs."⁴³ (Emphasis added.) Shorter-range, specific problems naturally become the focal points of attention.

If facts and analysis of specific situations comprise an ever larger proportion of the data about foreign affairs flowing into Moscow, are not the importance and content of ideology as a guide to world politics likely to suffer? Does not the need for detente between the superpowers perceived by the Soviets imply the depreciation of the Soviet concept of a world struggle?

Some observers believe these questions must be answered yes. A representative statement of this viewpoint, which correlates Soviet policies and perceptions as changing together, states:

The Marxist-Leninist ideology of an implacable conflict between the capitalist and socialist camps, which if it has not dictated the day-by-day decisions of the Kremlin leaders, has at least molded their thinking, is in the process of erosion. The Kremlin's diplomacy is being transformed at the same time as their image of the world.⁴⁴

Putting off hopes of realizing major ideological aims into the distant future is in a sense an erosion of faith. Certainly they become less relevant to daily concerns. But the Soviets have always believed that their ideology enabled them to be especially realistic in understanding political events, and there has been an effort to adapt ideology to important new factors. Thus, it is not simply a matter of postponing the realization of ideological goals or putting them on ice. The clearest and most important instance of adjusting ideology to international political facts of life was the revisionism undertaken by Khrushchev in the 1950s. The impact of nuclear weapons on the Leninist doctrine of the inevitability of war was acknowledged, and peaceful coexistence between East and West was elevated to a position of greater permanence and centrality.

Thus some concepts are permitted to erode while others are given new life. The ideology itself is not rejected; rather, its content is adjusted in response to outside events and pragmatic concerns related to Soviet involvement abroad. It is therefore less sharp in its distinctions between friend and foe and less clear-cut and inspiring in its definition of a special, progressive role for the USSR. Doctrinally pure, radical outlooks are possible when events are viewed at a distance. But involvement with those events brings about a more differentiated, less radical mix of views in which the dogmatists must make room for the revisionists or risk advocating the reversion of the Soviet state to an isolationist posture.

This change in basic perceptions is not entirely a conscious process, and it has come about gradually

with time in response to specific events (e.g. Stalin's death) as well as slower-moving trends. The Soviet image of the main adversary, the US, has been altered under pressure stemming from the existence of nuclear weapons and the emergence of China as an increasingly serious Soviet rival. The Soviet estimate of the international "correlation of forces" has likewise changed. For several years now Moscow has drawn attention to a favorable shift in this relationship, with the principal basis for this judgment being the increased strategic might of the USSR itself, but also with reference to economic and political trends in the west. And finally, the Soviet image of the role of the USSR in this new world political setting is somewhat different in an era of detente. The USSR perceives a new need for "normalized" relations with major states today and thus cannot itself be the direct agent for much of the change its leaders apparently still expect to occur. The devolution of the idea of the USSR as a controller and source of revolution elsewhere in the world is accompanied by an escalation of the USSR's role in a variety of other foreign relationships and in seeking to create a stable international environment for further internal Soviet development.

III. THE SOVIET VIEW OF THE US: DETENTE WITH THE MAIN ADVERSARY

A. US Foreign Policy: The Nixon Doctrine

As Soviet policies and views of the world have changed in recent years, so too have Soviet perceptions of the US shifted. A basic antagonism still marks the bilateral relationship, and as was the case throughout the postwar period the US remains for Moscow the principal opponent of Soviet influence. But the Soviets detect new elements in US foreign policy as Washington adapts to new international conditions, not least of which is the new level of Soviet strategic strength.

The US response to these conditions, the Soviets believe, is the Nixon Doctrine. In 1972 IUSAC published a book on this subject, and it provides a Soviet definition of what Moscow understands the essence of the policy to be:

The 'Nixon Doctrine' represents an attempt by the American ruling class, an inconsistent, and what is more, a contradictory attempt to adapt itself to the new correlation of

forces in the world and to the new structure of international relations, to adapt itself in such a way as to preserve its leadership in the imperialist world while balancing the degree of its own possible involvement in various international events with the level of expected material and moral-psychological costs."

Worth noting in particular is the last part of the definition. It identifies the main contradiction the Soviets see in the policy: the US will be more cautious in undertaking direct actions, basing its policies more on a cost-benefit calculation ("realism" in the Soviet view), but it still hopes to keep most existing positions intact.

How important, in Moscow's judgment, is the Nixon Doctrine for actual US foreign policies? The IUSAC volume refers to the doctrine as a "conception of the Republican administration," thereby implying its possible demise if a Democrat were to become President. But overall the book stresses the importance of the doctrine and contrasts it favorably with the policies of the Kennedy period. The US policy of the early 1960s is characterized by the Soviet authors as based on "an inflexible foreign policy conception" that led directly to a large-scale US involvement in Vietnam.⁴⁰ What is happening in Washington, the book declares, is the "formation of a new foreign policy conception . . . under conditions of a reduction of American global capabilities."⁴¹ Arbatov told a delegation of visiting West European Communists earlier this year that "the Nixon Doctrine, that is, the present American strategy, has enough impetus to keep it moving on the same line for six, seven or even ten years."⁴²

It is possible that the Soviet leadership is less sanguine than Soviet academic opinion about the prospect of real changes in US policies (Indochina aside) as a result of the Nixon Doctrine. A Western visitor to IMEMO in 1972 was told that the official Soviet estimate was that the proclamation of the Nixon Doctrine brought "no change" in US foreign policy in the 1970s.⁴³ Such a difference between academic and official viewpoints should not be surprising in light of the emphasis given in Soviet assessments to the inconsistency in US policies: "The current foreign policy philosophy of the ruling class of the USA is profoundly contradictory."⁴⁴

The roots of the contradictory nature of US foreign policy, the Soviets believe, are found in certain

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"significant shifts in the very structure of international relations:"

- the growing strength of socialism;
- the appearance of many new states, attended by greater complexity in international relationships;
- the emergence of new economic powers among key US allies;
- problems in the socialist world, particularly Peking's policies."

For Moscow the key elements of the US response to these changes have been:

- detente with the USSR;
- a less activist US attitude, particularly with respect to military intervention;
- acceptance of a greater degree of multipolarity in world politics and, with it, somewhat different relations with important allies;
- the use of improved relations with China as a political lever in bargaining with the USSR.

It is apparent from this list that Soviet reactions to various individual elements of American policy are likely to be far from uniform, ranging from satisfaction with the first two to uneasiness about the last two. Because the elements differ so greatly, judging what is likely to be the dominant trend in US policy has proved difficult for Soviet analysts. The IUSAC volume gives several possible lines of development, noting that more than one may coexist in varying degrees over time:

- aggression, adventurism, or the creation of crises in an attempt to retrieve lost positions with one blow;
- taking advantage of the development of other countries and thereby conserving US resources;
- neoisolationism, having divided the world into spheres of influence;
- coexistence and detente."

No doubt the actuality of detente over the last three years is encouraging to Soviet observers, academic and official alike. But many of them have serious doubts about the constancy of the American interest in detente, and alternative lines of US policy continue to be considered as active possibilities, depending on circumstances both outside and within the US.

B. Multipolarity

Among the circumstances contributing to Soviet uneasiness is the question of the future policies of key allies of both superpowers whose power has caused them to outgrow their former status as passive and dependent partners. This is the problem of growing

international political multipolarity, and the new power centers of greatest concern to Moscow are China, West Europe, and Japan.

This image of world politics, like the bipolar image it succeeded, is shared by Soviet and US observers." But the implications of multipolarity for the two countries are seen as quite different. The Soviets believe that the US views this prospect with relative equanimity, some US commentators even welcoming it. Observers in Moscow view supporters of the Nixon Doctrine as putting stock in the possibility of harnessing this new power to serve American interests. With respect to Soviet interests, however, the prospect is far less sanguine. Japan and Germany (particularly the latter) are remembered as enemies in the last war, they have long been US allies, and since 1945 they have not undergone any basic political or social transformations that might make them more pliable or friendly. China, the one major power that did undergo extensive political and social change and in fact became a formal Soviet ally, has become now the USSR's most bitter enemy. All these states lie on or close to Soviet borders. It is little wonder that the Soviet imagination is inclined toward contemplation of "worst-case" possibilities and that Arbatov, in articulating Soviet concern on this score, concludes that:

notions about a 'multipolar balance of forces,' which now have received widespread circulation in the West, and the policy arising out of these notions, representing essentially one of the modern variants of the old 'position of strength' policy, will in time inevitably begin, if we consider the longer term prospects, to retard the processes of detente and restrict them to extremely narrow limits."

For Moscow clearly the most important new "pole" in the international political realm is China. Chinese hostility toward the USSR has become more strident and politically important in the 1970s. In a sense it enables the US to undertake a trimming back of international obligations with lessened concern that new opportunities for Soviet gain will occur and be exploited by Moscow:

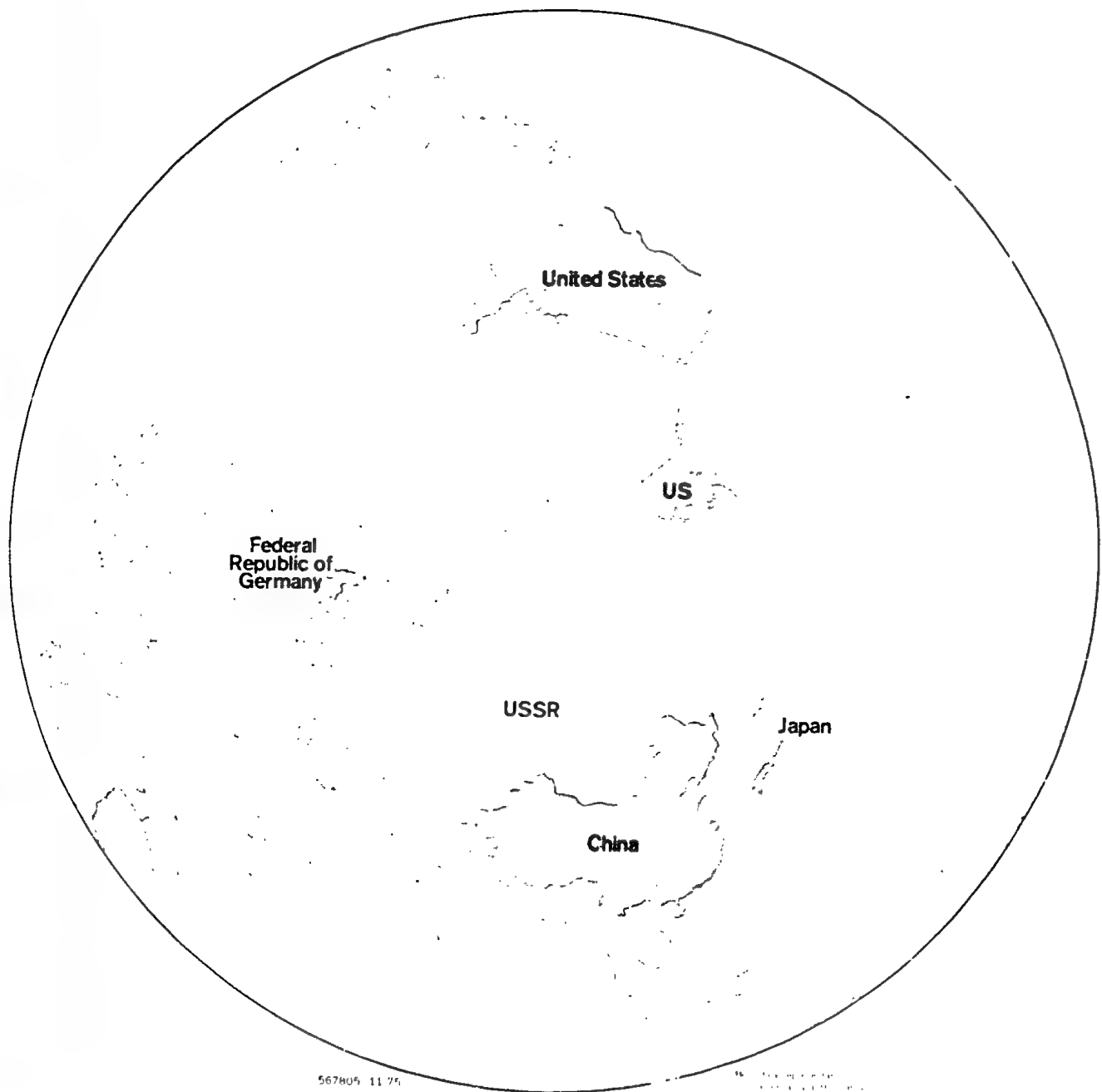
In planning the strategy of the USA in the 1970s, the Washington leaders proceed from the premise that, as long as the present situation in China is preserved, the leadership of the CPR will not act in solidarity with the USSR in any crisis situation involving military occupation by the USA or its allies.

Moscow has also claimed it sees evidence of growing collusion between Washington and Peking. Juxtaposing US non-interference in the Paracel

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The USSR in a Multipolar World



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President Nixon visits China, February 1972

Islands dispute and Chinese silence regarding US plans for Diego Garcia, an authoritative Soviet assessment of Chinese policy declares:

There is a certain parallel between the actions of the PRC and aggressive circles of the US, as seen in the gradual transformation of 'mutual understanding' into what is essentially the idea of division into spheres of influence, which constitutes a potential threat to China's neighbors."

As for other poles of international power that Moscow sees Washington counting on within the framework of the Nixon Doctrine, "in first place of importance the authors of the concept of 'selectiveness' unanimously place two other 'power centers' of the capitalist camp—West Europe and Japan."¹⁷ The Soviets attribute US interest in a new role for Japan in part to the more pressing economic competition Washington faces in the 1970s:

Not only the Pentagon but also the monopolies of the USA are interested that Japan . . . take upon itself a large military role in the Far East. Burdened by military concerns, Japan . . . would weaken its rivalry with the United States . . . domestic and international markets."

The Soviets also follow US debates as to which other countries or areas are worthy of US commitments and refers to places such as South Korea and Israel as "strong points." But none of these are seen as carrying notable weight as another major focus of power.

With respect to US alliance relationships, the Soviets believe that there is a contradiction implicit in

the Nixon Doctrine: the US sees strengthened allies as new pillars of a joint enterprise, but some allies may wish to use their new status to pursue national interests independent of US wishes. Western alliance relationships were further shaken by the consequences of the October 1973 war. The Soviets believe that this event caused "very serious and diverse changes" in the West—"changes in the relations between the developed and the developing states, between the Western powers themselves, and social and political changes within many of these countries." As an example of the changed relationship a Soviet writer noted that four major US partners—Germany, Britain, France, and Japan—reacted negatively to the idea of using force in the Middle East over the oil issue. The chief political facts to emerge as a result of the worldwide economic upset among the major powers are seen as a decline in US authority among its chief partners, and the "steady establishment of a self-assured West Germany."¹⁸ At this time the Soviets do not believe that the shifting of power among key Western countries has sorted itself out, and they watch intently for indications of change.*

C. The Domestic Basis of US Foreign Policy

Marxism-Leninism stresses the primary importance of domestic factors in determining the foreign policy of a state. In the Soviet view one of the main "epicenters" of the foreign policy reappraisal undertaken in Washington in the late 1960s was:

the acute domestic political and social crisis in the country. For the first time in the postwar years the weakening of the world positions of the main imperialist power was clearly and painfully interwoven with its internal difficulties."

Much of the Soviet commentary on US foreign policy revolves around the relative strength of various domestic forces that affect foreign policy decisions, the debates among them, the roles of individual and institutional actors, and the current political trends.

The Soviets believe that the consensus which underlay US policies during the Cold War has broken down, and "a new but shifting and unstable arrangement of domestic political forces has arisen on questions of foreign policy."¹⁹ The Soviets recognize that internal contests and debates over US foreign

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policies have occurred in the past. But the crucial question for the US then, in the Soviet view, had been *how* to use force to attain policy goals, not, as now, *whether* to use it. It is this shift in the terms of the debate in Washington that makes the Nixon Doctrine appear to the Soviets to be an important change in US foreign policy. The Soviets believe it came about largely for pragmatic reasons: the old policy was simply becoming less effective and too expensive.

The dominant theme in Soviet commentary about the domestic basis of the new policy is instability. This factor naturally concerns them most with respect to detente. American postwar policy in general is described as a "fusion of anti-communism and pragmatism." While this latest phase has involved greater emphasis on the latter element, it has not overcome the former, and thus the possibility of a shift back is not foreclosed. This is one of the main things the Soviets have in mind when they raise the issue of making detente "irreversible."

In addition to internal struggles the Soviets believe recent international events such as the revolution in Portugal and the collapse of the US position in Indochina further unsettle the domestic basis of US policy. Owing to these events, "a sharp discussion is taking place in the United States regarding the direction of the country's foreign policy," which will lead to "a painful revision."⁶² With so much at stake regarding the outcome of this debate over US policy, the Soviets have given much attention to the key US participants in it.

1. *The Executive.* Probably no single US actor has so engaged Soviet attention and hopes as the President and the key executive branch officials involved in foreign policy-making. In Moscow's view the executive branch and business have been the twin main pillars of the American interest in detente, and the greatest Soviet efforts to influence the domestic American debate about detente have been directed at them. The foreign policy of the largest capitalist state has long been seen in Moscow as controlled by big business. But increasing weight in recent years has been given by Soviet analysts to the independent role of the US executive branch in formulating policies:

the governmental mechanism established to serve the foreign policy strategy of American imperialism is itself beginning to exercise a direct influence on it.⁶³

Soviet observers give President Nixon the lion's share of the credit for shaping a positive American

policy toward improved relations with the USSR. His prior reputation as an anti-communist made him a particularly effective leader because the domestic political right was reluctant to attack his position. And the image of his power shone all the brighter in Soviet eyes because many in Moscow felt that he had neutralized potentially significant opposition and overcome policy inertia and ideological objections in pursuing detente. (Reportedly Moscow was also impressed with how he was able to resist public and congressional pressures for rapid withdrawal from Vietnam and to maintain an even, gradual disengagement policy.)⁶⁴

This attribution to President Nixon of considerable domestic political strength and of a key role in fostering a positive American attitude toward detente led the Soviets to be particularly shocked by the outcome of Watergate. The main Soviet suspicion was that anti-detente forces pushed President Nixon from office. A public lecturer in Leningrad expressed this idea in a way that probably reflected accurately the general Soviet reaction:

One can say that all of this is a result of the so-called Watergate affair, but it is significant that it was as Nixon began to establish better relations with the Soviet Union, plan his visit to the USSR for talks with Chairman Brezhnev, and propose extension of most-favored nation treatment for US-Soviet trade.⁶⁵

Pravda columnist Yury Zhukov also perceived dark forces and motives behind Watergate:

One could disregard all this fuss, of course, had one not been able to see, clearly looming behind the dubious personalities active in the foreground, much more substantial forces which are swimming against the tide and are unwilling to become reconciled to the changeover which is taking place from the cold war to a relaxation of tension.⁶⁶

Thus while pro-detente forces remain more powerful than those opposing detente, the departure of President Nixon marks a shift in the US domestic correlation of forces to the detriment of the former grouping.

More sophisticated Soviet appraisals of Watergate have been made.

I am quite aware that those Americans who currently oppose Nixon are not necessarily opposed to detente.⁶⁷ And it is likely that such reports were given to Soviet political leaders. But it is entirely probable that Watergate was a case where the general Soviet outlook, which tends to see hidden designs and forces behind every event,

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overcame possible specific intelligence reporting to the contrary, and high Soviet officials probably even today harbor suspicions of the kind described above about Watergate.

There is no doubt that, whatever its causes, President Nixon's resignation was interpreted by the Soviets as at least causing a "pause" in the advance of detente and as being potentially a major setback. Almost nostalgic references to the former President have occasionally been expressed in subsequent Soviet commentary.⁶⁸ The general Soviet feeling is that Moscow had worked out an understanding with President Nixon and at least knew where he stood. This element of stability in bilateral relations is felt to have been lost. A well-informed Soviet newsman has said that it is difficult for Soviet leaders to accept the new limitations of US executive power and that they view the increasing influence of Congress as disheartening.⁶⁹ Such views may reflect patterns of thinking drawn from Soviet political culture as much as natural Soviet concern for superpower relations.

The Soviets have watched carefully to see what impact the new President would have on US policies. After assessing the initial months of the new administration, including the Vladivostok meeting and the trade agreement setback, the Soviets seem to have tentatively concluded that President Ford is not continuing as full a policy of detente as his predecessor.⁷⁰ The reason for this change in the US posture, the Soviets believe, is not that the personal attitude of the new President is different, but that his effective power to marshal support for detente is less. The most unvarnished public statement to this effect has been provided by Danil Kraminov, the chief editor of the Soviet publication *Za rubezhom*, in the immediate wake of the collapse of the 1972 trade agreement: "We now notice that Ford has less backbone than we could foresee and is more dependent on pressure groups than one could have imagined."⁷¹

Even after this setback to detente the Soviets felt that President Ford worked sincerely and hard for a more favorable US trade act than the Congress passed.⁷² But the rest of the executive branch is not seen by the Soviets as entirely of the same mind. Arbatov claims to believe that the middle level of the US government bureaucracy has changed its sentiments in the direction of more negative views regarding the USSR.⁷³ The image of an internally contentious executive branch was true of

President Nixon's administration as well. Some past Washington "bureaucratic scandals" involving dramatic revelations (the Pentagon papers, the US "tilt" in the 1971 India-Pakistan war) have been interpreted in Moscow as resulting from "the keen rivalry in the ruling clique of Washington and the struggle for power and influence."⁷⁴ Specifically referred to in this context are the Secretaries of State and Defense and the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. But while these elements are believed to have existed during President Nixon's tenure, the Soviets did not judge them capable then of seriously threatening detente.

2. *The Congress.* The most serious internal pressure threatening the US commitment to detente comes, in Moscow's view, from the Congress. The Soviets paid much less attention to Congress than to the executive until Watergate. Arbatov reportedly was in temporary disfavor for wrongly predicting that President Nixon would ride out Watergate, and as a result of that experience the Soviets decided to examine more closely the role of Congress in US domestic politics.⁷⁵ One clear sign of greater Soviet interest in influencing Congress was the 1974 parliamentary delegation visit to the US led by Boris Ponomarev, a candidate member of the Politburo, in his capacity as Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Commission of one house of the USSR Supreme Soviet. It was the first such visit undertaken by Moscow.

A major change in Congress seen by the Soviets is a new willingness to challenge foreign policy positions of the executive, combined with a new sense of power in the policy-making process. This is particularly true of the Senate, where any major treaty such as a new SALT accord must be approved, and was convincingly demonstrated in the trade bill controversy. The new Congress is seen as more liberal in composition, and therefore more inclined to emphasize domestic needs.⁷⁶

But the Soviets are still very reluctant to predict what specific tendencies will be imparted to US foreign policy by the newly liberal and assertive Congress. One domestic trend that has been noted is the growth in the number of Americans who declare themselves independent of the two major political parties. This, along with the low level of voter participation in the 1974 elections, is cited as evidence that the basic structure of the two-party system as a whole is in trouble.⁷⁷ The likely consequence of this for

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Boris N. Ponomarev (third from left, front row) leads Soviet parliamentary delegation visiting US in 1974 in his capacity as Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Council of Nationalities, USSR Supreme Soviet

policy is instability. With respect to SALT, a key detente issue, one Soviet account notes encouragingly that "even" Senator Thurmond expressed the belief that an agreement along the lines of the Vladivostok formula would be approved by the Senate. But while this is taken as evidence that there is broad agreement on the value of SALT, such a "broadening of the zone of the center . . . is not distinguished by its stability and is capable at times of rather rapidly changing. . . ." Besides, in the Soviet view, broad agreement alone is not sufficient to sustain a policy. Well attuned to the power of a dedicated minority from historical experience, the Soviets believe that it was an underestimated, "vociferous lobbying minority" that thwarted the US trade bill.⁸ The same could happen to SALT II.

Another specific focal point of Soviet attention has been the "liberals" in American politics. Once thought of as possible allies of Moscow in promoting

detente, the liberal and intellectual communities of the US are now thought to have an ambiguous and unstable attitude toward the USSR.⁹ Arbatov has publicly ridiculed liberal politicians, scholars, and journalists who criticize detente as political faddists.¹⁰ The neoisolationist tendency associated with liberals is believed in Moscow to be an unthinking, or "involuntary" threat to detente arising simply because *all* foreign policy questions are being pushed to the background.¹¹

3. *Business.* The most consistent pro-detente force in the US is now seen by the Soviets as American business, especially big corporations. It is paradoxical that this should occur just when trade has become relatively less important to detente, as compared to the expectations of 1972. The Soviets have always believed that Western capitalists could be attracted to expanding business relations with the USSR. Marxism-Leninism teaches that imperialism is

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constantly seeking new markets abroad to absorb excess production, and the image of a capitalist thirst to exploit the untapped Soviet market seemed to be confirmed by Western investment in the USSR undertaken in the early years of the Soviet regime. The Soviets hope to cultivate US business interests related to detente and use them as allies of Soviet foreign policy in affecting the American attitude, public and official, toward detente.⁸³

D: The Bilateral Superpower Relationship

The Soviet preoccupation with the "instability" of US foreign policy is largely a reflection of Moscow's concern over the future course of US-USSR detente. Soviet politicians and commentators alike are deeply suspicious of the depth of the US commitment to detente and alert to the smallest piece of evidence indicating US doubts or qualifications on this score. The struggle between pro- and anti-detente forces has become a basic dividing line in virtually all commentary on the US side of the detente process, and Soviet rhetoric and policies frankly aim at strengthening, where possible, the "realistic" side in the US that favors detente. The Soviets feel this effort is necessary to keep the US from backsliding to Cold War attitudes and policies.⁸⁴

The Soviet concern for detente has been the chief reason for the restrained fashion in which the Soviets have treated recent political and economic problems the US has encountered. The Soviets fear that these problems will displace detente issues as priority items on the American policy agenda. The US will not necessarily feel compelled to throw detente overboard, the Soviets realize, but Washington might halt further progress in the superpower relationship while attempting to stabilize its economic and other foreign policy fronts.

The Soviets perceive anti-detente forces as well organized and still quite strong. The upsetting of the administration's version of the US trade bill is cited as evidence supporting this characterization.⁸⁵ Arbatov has noted American articles about the careful attention and hard work of the Jewish lobby and Senator Jackson's office in shaping the final law.⁸⁶ The Soviets have been prone in the past to stress the "hard" elements in the US decision-making process, and this tendency persists today. There is probably also a certain amount of unconscious attributing of Soviet attitudes to US policy-makers.

Whatever their sources, the Soviet concern over "zig-zags" in US detente policies, the constant emphasis on the need for imparting momentum to detente and for making detente "irreversible," the doubts expressed about the US capacity for sustaining a consistent foreign policy over many years, the great importance attributed to the formal 1972 agreement on principles to govern bilateral relations, including explicit recognition of "peaceful coexistence"—all these are based in great measure on the fear that a hard-line, anti-Soviet policy may reemerge in the US at any time.

Despite the persistence of these themes in Soviet commentary, the Soviet assessment of the *balance* between the "realistic" and "hard" elements in the US, and thus the Soviet judgment as to the status of detente, has continued to favor "realism." The IUSAC journal published an article in the Spring of 1975 asserting that:

on the whole in American society foreign policy realism has seriously crowded out prejudice and recognition of the impossibility of a policy based on opposition to the USSR is becoming all the more widespread. . . ."

The major Soviet leadership speeches of Spring 1975, while they did not provide such specific assessments of US political opinion, stressed the possibility for further detente and gave relatively little attention to the "hard" elements on the US side.*

The moments of gravest Soviet doubts about this judgment occurred in the Winter of 1974-1975. Somewhat at sea about US attitudes after President Nixon's resignation, the Soviets were shaken by the battle over the US trade bill in the US Congress. Moscow felt it had made significant concessions to accommodate Senator Jackson and probably also felt it had been reasonably forthcoming on SALT at the Vladivostok summit by agreeing to drop the forward-based systems issue and to accept equal aggregate ceilings on strategic weapons. But the publicity surrounding the alleged Soviet acceptance of the Jackson amendment proved too much for the December 1974 CPSU Central Committee plenum. A Gromyko letter denying Soviet acceptance of any numerical quota for Soviet emigration was made public after this meeting, and the passage of the final act, with its limited credit provisions, elicited a Soviet renunciation of its obligations under the 1972 US-25X1

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USSR Trade Agreement. Arbatov has portrayed the US attitude in this whole episode, as expressed by congressional actions, as that of chasing illusions, the chief one being that of misjudging enthusiastic Soviet statements about the possibilities existing in trade as Soviet weakness.⁸⁸

Through 1974 Senator Jackson was portrayed by Soviet commentators as riding high, and pro-detente forces in the US were viewed as being on the defensive. But in February 1975, after the Soviet retaliation for the restrictions in the US Trade Act, a key Central Committee official assessed Senator Jackson's political base as too narrow for him to become President.⁸⁹ And Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin has told [redacted] that further studies have concluded that, even if he were elected, Senator Jackson would be limited by "objective conditions."⁹⁰ This overall Soviet judgment of the strength of pro-detente forces in the US is framed in terms of years. Thus setbacks like the one over the trade bill are by no means excluded from the Soviet view of possible, even likely events affecting US policies.

While the Soviets are anxious not to project an image of weakness and there are Soviet limits to the concessions Moscow will make in order to further detente, it does seem clear that the Soviet desire to improve superpower relations is very strong. One of the unarticulated Soviet attitudes that seem to underlie this urge is the notion of condominium leadership of world politics. This idea goes beyond the Soviet desire for assurance that the US is not going to attack the USSR, or more broadly, that US and Soviet interests can be accommodated in potential hotspots without approaching the brink of war. It also reflects a Soviet wish to prevent third parties from drawing the superpowers into confrontation. These more "defensive" concerns remain unresolved in Moscow's judgment, at least in any permanent way. Presumably, success in making detente "irreversible"—whatever that might mean in concrete terms—would satisfy these concerns. But the Soviets have raised the issue of moving beyond detente toward "the creation of a solid general peace." This goal is seen as possible for the present generation of Soviets and Americans, and its key aspects are outlined as:

- elimination forever of the threat of war;
- creation of an effective global system of collective security, based on regional systems;
- overcoming of the ecological crisis;
- regulation of an international division of labor on a truly worldwide and long-term basis."

This scheme is partly visionary and partly based on current Soviet policies. But the role of the superpowers in such a world would clearly be dominant. The machinery that would guarantee this kind of world is nowhere defined by the author of the preceding passage. But Marshal Grechko, the Soviet Defense Minister and a Politburo member, has provided one possible mechanism for preserving a global status quo by asserting relevance for the anti-Hitler coalition in today's world:

The combat alliance of the USSR with the United States of America, Great Britain, France, and other capitalist countries, which united their efforts for the destruction of the aggressor, graphically confirmed the possibility of effective political and military cooperation of states with different social systems. In present-day circumstances the correct assessment of the experience of this cooperation and the drawing from it of useful lessons have very important meaning."

Grechko may have China uppermost in his mind as the power most needful of a reminder of this example of US-USSR cooperation, but the relevance would easily be the same for any power which arose in the future to challenge Moscow.

This Soviet attitude remains an inchoate and implicit element in the Soviet view about world affairs. It is in part wishful thinking, a desire that the main adversary become somehow sympathetic to the Soviet view of world politics and cooperate in doing away with threats to the USSR ("if only the US and USSR would get together . . ."). It is also virtually impossible to express publicly without alarming third countries, and was explicitly rejected by the US in the case of the October 1973 war. Yet the impression remains that the Soviets would welcome an expansion of bilateral cooperation on international political issues with the US.

E. Summitry—The Personal Touch

One aspect of formal interstate relations that the Soviets have increasingly used and ascribed importance to in recent years is summit meetings. Meetings with American Presidents are viewed as particularly critical because of the importance of the superpower relationship, but summits are also valued in relations with other key countries, i.e. France, Germany, and Britain. Soviet commentary stresses the idea that summits have become a regular and normal fixture of world politics. Brezhnev has referred to them as a "significant feature of international relations," and Kirilenko has asserted that improved relations between the USSR and the US were

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"achieved primarily as a result of the [then] two summit meetings" between Brezhnev and President Nixon."

The individual personal and political characteristics of the opposite number whom the General Secretary meets are considered by the Soviets to be important—he does not simply represent a national viewpoint that would be voiced by anyone occupying a top political post. Brezhnev noted in 1973, in the midst of Watergate and soon after the Middle East war, that "a lot will depend on who in the USA will be running the ship of state."¹ This emphasis on individual leaders did in fact seem to affect the course of Soviet policy in mid-1974 as Georges Pompidou, Willy Brandt, and then Richard Nixon left office in fairly rapid succession. All were major summit partners of Brezhnev in detente diplomacy, and a pause in the major East-West negotiations at the time probably reflected in part Moscow's need to reassess the status of Soviet relations with the countries they had headed.

There are several logical reasons why the Soviets value summitry, especially with the US, most of them self-evident (e.g. the special urgency for dealing with the nuclear arms race—one Soviet writer claims that it replaces the former system of "signaling"—and the ability to settle particularly knotty problems that lower-level discussions have not resolved). In addition, the Soviets also feel personal meetings are useful in assessing the intentions of other parties:

A frank discussion naturally does not always eliminate differences of opinion, but it is always useful because it helps to understand better the intentions and interests of the other side. . . ."

Information acquired in summits must of course still be evaluated; complete candor is not expected. But such information is authoritative, and the impressions it creates in the minds of Soviet participants carry extraordinary weight because of their source and their direct impact on the topmost leaders.

Whether the effects of such meetings go beyond giving the Soviets a high-level and current reading of the other side's positions, motives, and resoluteness and actually affect more basic Soviet beliefs about the nature of the American (or another country's) political system or of the fundamental differences between the two sides can only be speculated about. Certainly the Soviets are more clearly aware of the limits on what a US President can deliver in carrying

out his side of a bargain after the experience of the trade agreement imbroglio. But they probably remain convinced that the administrations of both Presidents Nixon and Ford negotiated the issue sincerely and worked positively in attempting to obtain US trade legislation acceptable to Moscow. This certainly was Brezhnev's position in 1973 when, in private discussions with another world leader, he portrayed President Nixon as striving to get trade barriers removed and not responsible for any shortcomings in the American attitude toward detente.²

In this limited sense there seems to be an element of "trust" involved in summitry. There is no room in the general Soviet outlook for "trust" between the two competing social systems. And to the Soviet mind a "subjective" effort by an individual, even a US President operating largely within his own domestic political system, must still contend with (and cannot by any means be counted upon to overcome) "objective factors" that constrain him. But there is a degree of Soviet confidence built up in summit meetings that good faith is being exercised by the other side and that, while tactical advantage is still sought and used by both sides, what is finally agreed to between top leaders will be taken seriously by the other side as an obligation.³ President Nixon's agreement to use only Brezhnev's interpreter in private summit meetings was in part a symbolic gesture implying trust in his host.

The main limitation of this kind of "trust" is that it is personal and thus treated as important by relatively few persons. Brezhnev himself probably feels its impact most because of his participation in summits and tends more than others to identify it as representing the position of the US as a whole.* But those not involved (for example, regional party secretaries) probably give little value to "trust."

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*Only when charisma combines with a President's favorable actions is "trust," normally engendered in personal contact, identified with the US as a whole. John Kennedy managed to accomplish this for a while in the minds of the Soviet populace as well as with Khrushchev through his international image. But even in that instance the effects of this "subjective" factor were heavily circumscribed and proved fragile.

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General Secretary Brezhnev and President Ford meet
at Vladivostok, 1974

Apart from the establishment of a degree of good faith in bilateral relations, summits give a unique opportunity to the Soviets to convey their views and apply influence, even pressure, directly to a key target figure. The increased Soviet emphasis on summitry may also reflect a heightened confidence in the ability of the top leaders, especially the General Secretary, to promote Soviet interests through negotiations as well as the value of having a single individual represent the USSR, symbolizing unity, strength, and stability. But, as the problems of implementing the 1972 US-USSR trade agreement have shown, even when the US President is cooperative, understands the Soviet position, and is willing to agree to terms acceptable to Moscow, the results may still be difficult to sustain.

IV. THE INTERNATIONAL "CORRELATION OF FORCES"

A. A World in Transition

One of the most basic Soviet conceptions about world politics is that the era following the Bolshevik

Revolution is one of transition from a world dominated by capitalism to a world dominated by socialism. In such a transitional world capitalist elements coexist with socialist elements, but in an atmosphere of struggle between the two sides. The capitalist elements are thought to belong essentially to the past, but they are judged to be still quite strong in practical terms and capable of formidable resistance to their inevitable demise. The socialist elements, the USSR foremost among them, are identified with progress, peace, justice, and the future, and are judged to have acquired great strength in a relatively short time—on a historical scale—and to be steadily growing. Thus world politics is pictured as dynamic, and the measure of the global contest—and the key determinant of its outcome—is the international "correlation of forces."

In assessing the strengths of the two sides, the Soviets attach central importance to the power of the principal states, especially their overall economic and military weight. A favorite statistic cited by the Soviets in support of the growing power of "socialism" is the percentage of the world industrial product manufactured in the USSR and other socialist countries (currently claimed to be about 40 percent). (The rapid economic growth of Japan and Germany prior to World War I—and its consequences for their foreign policies—greatly impressed Lenin, and many Soviets credit the forced pace of Soviet industrialization in the 1930s with their survival of the 1941 German invasion. Today, apart from the superpower balance, it is once again the rise of West German and Japanese economic power that most concerns Moscow in this connection.)

The margin of greater military and economic strength enjoyed by the major powers over others is seen as giving them particular political weight. While professing to believe in an essential equality for all states, the Soviets also assert "the actual situation is such that in international relations . . . the great powers play a special role." This is thought to be especially true in matters of peace and security

since the real means of ensuring peace and, at the same time, the instruments of war, are first and foremost in the hands of the great powers. Therefore, practice frequently takes the course of a preliminary agreement on questions among the great powers, since the absence of agreement among them renders useless, and sometimes even harmful, the adoption of decisions concerning international problems of a general order."

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But if economic and military strength—the traditional basic elements of national power—are viewed by the Soviets as the bedrock facts of international life, other, less tangible social and political factors are also considered of vital importance to the international correlation of forces. These may be internal, such as national morale, the degree of cohesion within a society, or the strength of political leadership. Or they may be international, such as the amount of unity or disunity within an alliance or the impact of an external factor (e.g. nuclear weapons, the energy crisis). Such factors take on particular importance in a world in which the threat or use of force by the strongest nations is inhibited by the risks of superpower confrontation and escalation to the nuclear level.

The Soviets believe that these intangible factors—will, morale, discipline, determination, iron leadership on the Soviet side, combined with disagreements and irresolution among the Western powers—enabled the USSR to surmount its manifest economic and military weaknesses in the early years of its existence and in the Cold War period of Soviet strategic atomic inferiority.

In recent years the Soviets have emphasized the theme that the international "correlation of forces," under the impact of major new factors in world politics, is changing in their favor from the balance that prevailed during the Cold War. In fact, Soviet formulations note that the balance has already "clearly" or even "radically" shifted to a significant degree and that this movement is continuing. Some leaders and commentators give the impression that this most recent change has somehow tipped the world balance past a notional midway point, as though "socialism" now possessed more than half of a total world power pie:

The prediction of V. I. Lenin, who did not doubt that the time would come when the international consolidation of the victorious proletariat of a number of countries would exercise *decisive* influence on world politics, has come true. In the third quarter of the 20th Century socialism *has become the main factor* of world development, and the influence of the coordinated policy of the countries of the socialist community on the course of international events is constantly growing." (Emphasis added.)

Other statements are more modest in their claims, but most convey an image of politically significant change in the international balance in the Soviet favor, reflecting both a sense of Soviet well-being and a perception of Western decline.

There has also been some Soviet academic attention to the concept of an international balance of power understood as an equilibrium:

Like any other system, the system of international relations has a tendency toward self-preservation and development. The first tendency is realized through the formation of a stable equilibrium of forces. ¹⁰⁰

This conception is, of course, anathema to orthodox ideology, as it can be taken to imply possible denial of the main goal of eventual worldwide victory. But similar statements may appear more frequently in Soviet commentary if strategic nuclear parity continues indefinitely and no striking wave of leftward political changes appears.

In contrast to the most recent major shift in the international correlation of forces, the expansion of Soviet power in East Europe after World War II, which was a "sharp turn" in the world balance, the current shift is perceived as gradual: "... the struggle of the two orientations in international politics is so intense that movement forward is proceeding very slowly." ¹⁰¹ The slower pace of change fits better the current atmosphere of detente. The eventual goal in the minds of Kremlin policy-makers may be the kind of Soviet control that is exercised over East Europe. But this kind of dramatic shift is not clearly foreseen for the near future, and in fact there is concern that such an event occurring in one country, such as Portugal, might well bring about a strengthening of reactionary forces elsewhere and produce a net loss worldwide. Instead, the proximate aim seems to be to encourage incremental changes that will align the foreign policies of additional countries with Soviet positions and thereby strengthen the Soviet side and weaken the West on the diplomatic front.

In the past the Soviets have had hopes of significant gains in the third world. These hopes have largely given way to a belief that the smaller-scale, incremental change now envisaged by Moscow can be encouraged both in the third world and in the advanced nations. The Soviets believe that in this way both international and internal political structures that contribute to Western strength can be weakened.

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The general tenor of Soviet commentary has been that the favorable shift in the international "correlation of forces" is continuing. But this process, as well as the factors that underlie it and the consequences expected to flow from it, are not viewed in Moscow wholly one-sidedly. For one thing the changes that have occurred in the 1970s are not yet consolidated and irrevocable. In this critical regard they differ from the marked Soviet gains after World War II, which are judged now to be "irreversible." And unlike them, current advances are neither territorial nor, in most cases, governmental changes. Even the long and expensive Soviet nuclear missile buildup has not assured continued strategic parity as the military balance remains hostage to potential future US advances.

In addition, those factors promoting Western disunity are subject to repair. One Soviet view holds that the US, once it takes the decision to reinvigorate NATO, will be able to force necessary changes in Portugal and Greece to achieve its aim.¹⁰⁵ The Soviets further recognize that their ability to disrupt any serious Western efforts to promote unity on financial, energy, or other issues is minimal.

Moreover, the new patterns of world politics are not all favorable to the USSR. The defection of China has forced Soviet leaders to resort to strained rationalizations in an effort to maintain an image of undamaged "socialist" strength. Thus, China is considered to have "temporarily dropped out of the common struggle for the working-class cause" and to have "in some degree prevented the socialist system from attaining still more substantial success."¹⁰⁶ Tokyo's newfound, though still undeveloped sense of independence has moved Japan closer to China than to the USSR.

Other general trends, noted in both East and West, have mixed implications. The growing power of non-industrial countries at present disrupts mainly

Western economies and international politics. But if more of these countries acquire nuclear weapons, they will increasingly be viewed as potential threats to Moscow as well. Nationalism has been a force that has upset the relations of third world countries with the advanced West and has caused problems for NATO. But it has also curbed international cooperation among Communist parties and Soviet success in furthering East European integration.¹⁰⁷

The most important possible consequences for Moscow of this impermanence of the current change in the international power balance, at least in the near term, are those affecting detente. Soviet commentary lauds the end of the era of Cold War confrontation and the "fundamental restructuring of international relations" as steps promoting peace. How have these come about? According to Suslov:

... the fundamental change in the correlation of forces in the international arena in favor of peace and socialism underlies detente. And this factor is constantly active, and is truly of more than passing importance.¹⁰⁸

But, as a Soviet commentator notes, continued detente for the future has not been assured:

The world situation is still not sufficiently stable and is to a certain extent in a state of transition which can lead either back to the cold war or forward to a lasting and just peace based on disarmament.¹⁰⁹

The fate of detente is critical to Soviet calculations because detente is seen as the policy best able to bring about future Soviet advances internationally. In the past, world wars have brought about the great changes in the world power balance by making possible the Bolshevik victory in Russia and the Soviet advances in East Europe. But the Soviets recognize that in the nuclear age war involving the superpowers cannot be viewed as leading to similar changes in the future. Thus, for the Soviets, detente underlies future favorable changes in the international "correlation of forces" as much as the current favorable balance underlies detente.

B. The Current "General Crisis" of Capitalism

Soviet commentary throughout 1975 indicates that detente clearly remains the main Soviet foreign policy as Moscow approaches the 25th CPSU Congress. There have been signs, however, that the Soviet consensus backing the policy is less solid, or at least less generally enthusiastic than was the case in the early 1970s. The December 1974 Central Committee

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plenum is said to have taken a long hard look at detente, and a somewhat more "sober" approach reportedly emerged from that appraisal.¹¹⁰ Some of the public defenses of the policy have been almost too passionate, as though extraordinary efforts were required to sustain detente in the face of potentially serious opposition.¹¹¹

Underlying the Soviet doubts about detente is Moscow's view of the current phase of the "general crisis" of capitalism. The Soviets believe that in the 1970s, especially since the October 1973 war, a combination of economic, social, and political problems has thrown the West into disarray. The Soviets are ambivalent about both their assessments of the outcome of this situation and what attitude they should adopt toward it. On the one hand they are tempted to try to take advantage of it to expand their international political and economic positions. But they also realize that such actions on their part—or even the crisis itself in the absence of such actions—could seriously threaten detente.

The central point virtually all Soviet commentary makes is that the current crisis is unusually deep and general. The deterioration of the capitalist system is seen as a "definite qualitative change," and is depicted as representing the worst situation for the West since World War II. Suslov and others have even compared today's situation with that of the 1930s.¹¹²

The current crisis is viewed as going beyond an ordinary cyclical disruption because it is a combination of several different crises: economic, monetary, energy, ecological, internal political, ideological, and in the international relationships among major industrial nations and between them and the less-developed, raw material-producing states.¹¹³ The main crisis is economic and is itself a three-pronged problem involving inflation, recession, and unemployment. Ponomarev has characterized the overall combination of crises as "unique in the history of postwar capitalism." For him, the Western economic problems represent an "unprecedented combination," and "never before have crisis processes," economic and political, domestic and international, "so powerfully affected each other."¹¹⁴ Inozemtsev has written that "the struggle for raw materials is only beginning to unfold."¹¹⁵ And one of his institute's staffers has offered the judgment that this problem, already of "an unprecedentedly acute international political character," is likely to continue

as it is based on "long-term factors of an objective nature."¹¹⁶

It is not surprising that the Soviets see the consequences of so massive a Western dislocation as being potentially very important. The class struggle within Western countries is seen as sharpening, and at the height of the Western energy crisis of the 1973-1974 Winter, Ponomarev declared that "at any moment in one or another link in [the capitalist] system a situation could arise which opens the way to fundamental revolutionary transformations."¹¹⁷ Some high-level Soviet academics (Sobolev and Inozemtsev) privately foresee the emergence in France or Italy of leftist coalition governments including Communists within the next ten years, and they even speculate on the possibility of civil war in these countries within the same time period.¹¹⁸ In discussing the key focal points of the mounting class struggle, Ponomarev in 1974 listed the capitalist countries first, ahead of the formerly colonial areas and the anti-imperialist movement.¹¹⁹

But if such beliefs are in fact held by some Soviet officials and academic experts, there are a number of indications that more modest implications are currently being considered in Moscow as well. The tone of leadership pronouncements on the "general crisis" has been generally restrained. *Pravda* commentator Yury Zhukov has privately described the current Western situation as a "passing phenomenon," and in general recent Soviet opinions, expressed in conversations, attribute considerable overall resiliency to the Western economic system.¹²⁰ One authoritative public article emphasizes that the West is taking active and effective measures to deal with its problems:

- "the monopoly bourgeoisie is an experienced, cunning, and resourceful enemy;"
- "it has created a "survival mechanism;"
- "it is "constantly improving this mechanism and adapting it to new historical conditions;"
- "it has "a strategy of economic, political, and ideological struggle;"
- "it is maintaining its international alliances;
- "as a result, "it is wrong to consider that the development of the general crisis of capitalism can be regarded simply as a global weakening of capitalism, as its decay."¹²¹

A recent IMEMO analysis emphasizes that, despite the continuing and deeply-rooted differences between countries supplying raw materials and large-scale Western importing nations, the latter are capable of retaining access to raw materials through still-existing

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international economic mechanisms and concessions.¹²² Another article has offered the judgement that "it is perfectly believable that capitalism will be able to overcome the current period of crises and shocks."¹²³

The difference between the overdrawn and the restrained views can be explained in three ways, all of which are probably accurate in some degree:

- private, and more operationally significant views differ from public positions, which are made partly for propaganda reasons; thus in assessing the Chilean experience in mid-1974, Ponomarev wrote in the journal of the international Communist movement about the value of "the constant preparedness of the revolutionary vanguard and the masses—in deeds and not in words—to use the boldest means of struggle should the situation require it," while in a more restricted document pointing out that the class enemy "is not removed from power at a stroke but loosened from it gradually."¹²⁴
- there exists debate between two or more groups;¹²⁵
- the Soviet view has changed over time; whereas Ponomarev mentioned the possibility of "revolutionary transformations" in early 1974, he stressed a year later that "the danger from the right . . . has become greater."¹²⁶

It was virtually inevitable that Western economic and political problems on the scale of the last two years would upset the Soviet calculus of detente. Detente as originally conceived in Moscow, with its emphasis on the development of long-term large-scale economic relations and increased political cooperation with advanced Western nations, presumed that the West would be a stable trading and negotiating partner. Bypassing any claims that the Soviets can solve modern economic, scientific, and technical problems uniquely well and by themselves, some Soviet commentators have acknowledged the need for more international interdependence between East and West:

the nature and scale of these problems are such that their practical solution cannot be found within the framework of a single state or even a group of states; joint efforts by everyone are required here.¹²⁷

But the Soviet interest in real economic interdependence outside the socialist community is largely limited to relationships involving the USSR with advanced Western states.¹²⁸ And in this area the recent disappointments in trade relations with the US, although partially made up for in deals elsewhere in the West, mean that the economic benefits expected from detente for the 1976-1980 planning period must be calculated in more modest terms than was thought previously.

In addition to these economic factors necessitating a Soviet reappraisal of the rationale for detente, possible opportunities for more radical, quicker political gains are seen to be more likely, at least in the eyes of any orthodox "true believers" in world revolution still existing in Moscow. Such opportunities might be seen as requiring bolder actions, perhaps bolder than detente will permit. Elements in the International Department of the CPSU Central Committee reportedly feel that not enough is being done to take advantage of the Western economic problems.¹²⁹

Yet the Soviets have thus far taken a generally cautious approach. The depression of the 1930s, they recall, brought to power Adolph Hitler as well as Franklin Roosevelt, and recent Soviet warnings of a new fascist danger note the special risks of a reactionary swing in the current age of nuclear weapons.¹³⁰ In addition, the Communists and other leftists in the West are judged in Moscow to be unprepared for bold action:

the political maturity and degree of organization of the working class and the firmness of its alliance with the other strata of working people are still insufficient to make full use of the maturity of the objective factors of the transition of socialism and to guarantee a resolute advance to a new social system.¹³¹

The touchstone of Soviet commentary on the current stage of the West's "general crisis" has been at least as much the possible adverse effects of the crisis on detente as the possible opportunities the Western condition may offer for revolutionary advance. The most complete authoritative expositions on the "crisis" are more in the nature of efforts to steer detente over the shoals of this unexpected phase of capitalism than exhortations to scrap detente and seek expanded political power. Advocates of detente have seemingly been able successfully to make the argument in the Kremlin that detente has both helped to make the "crisis" possible and still remains the best Soviet policy for exploiting it and further improving the international "correlation of forces."

C. The Strategic Balance

At the core of the international "correlation of forces" is the military balance between the USSR and the US, and its most important aspect, in turn, is the strategic nuclear weapons balance. The current Soviet leadership has apparently concluded that the USSR requires a position of strategic parity with the US as a

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basis for its foreign policy. (It is not clear whether Moscow intends or hopes to move beyond such a position, although it is unlikely that it expects to be able to do so easily or soon.) This is the principal meaning of the Soviet strategic weapons buildup of the past ten years. Khrushchev may or may not have been willing to settle for some version of a second-strike strategic capability; his successors clearly have rejected that course.

The Soviet leaders clearly will not tolerate being at a strategic disadvantage comparable to their position in the early 1960s. They believe that the US must be made to know unequivocally that the USSR will defend its interests no less tenaciously than the US. Minimal security could be bought for less. But parity shows Washington that the USSR is willing to pay the full measure of costs necessary both to insure its national security and to support an active foreign policy.

The Soviets apparently believe that the US could not confront the true consequences of nuclear war until its strategic advantage had been erased:

As long as the leaders of the imperialist powers had a monopoly on atomic weapons, and as long as they believed that they possessed overwhelming nuclear supremacy over the Soviet Union, they did not think of detente, but of 'rolling back' socialism and of a 'preventive war' against our country.¹²

The Soviets have stressed the importance of the explicit US recognition of equality between the two superpowers made at the 1972 summit, even more so than the SALT I agreements signed at the same time. They believe that this recognition marks a change in US attitudes from those of the 1960s and lies at the heart of the US acceptance of detente; it is seen as based on the objective circumstance of strategic parity, not simply on "good will." US attitudes may not remain constant on this course, but at least it will be more difficult for US leaders to revert to older attitudes and use them to justify new arms programs:

The recognition by the United States of the principles of peaceful coexistence, equality, and equal security in relations with the USSR in significant measure limits the opportunities of militarist circles in their attempts to achieve even the appearance of strategic superiority over the Soviet Union.¹³

Just how the Soviets judge the current strategic balance is not known. For the entire postwar period the Soviets have generally been behind in terms of effective forces in being, and there may be some carry-over of feelings of inferiority even into the present period, despite impressive Soviet gains. There have

been some specific indications that the Soviets do not feel they have actually caught up. Arbatov has even argued that they feel behind in every respect.¹⁴ This may be true, but such an observation is so clearly self-serving as to be impossible to evaluate. It is likely that there is a range of Soviet opinions about the strategic balance, each tendency stressing particular elements in the overall picture and containing its own implications for Soviet policy.

The Soviets have had problems in judging US strategic doctrine and intentions. Even mutual deterrence and the value of a threshold between conventional and nuclear wars have caused them difficulty, although both are essentially accepted in Moscow. The Soviets should have an advantage over US observers in putting together an accurate assessment of the adversary because of the availability of information on American doctrines and programs. But though this may be true for existing capabilities, there is much to suggest that considerable Soviet uncertainty exists over judgments as to US programs and predictions of the future balance. Another problem results from a perceptual asymmetry in which the motives of the US are viewed with extreme suspicion while possible threatening implications of Soviet programs or statements are not considered, or if raised as issues, are rejected out of hand. Even the US doctrine of strategic "sufficiency" as a guide for US programs was felt by at least some Soviets to be a euphemism for superiority.¹⁵

V. MOSCOW'S PERCEPTION OF THE SOVIET ROLE IN WORLD AFFAIRS

The Kremlin leadership probably feels that it can view the current Soviet position in the world with considerable satisfaction. Much of that satisfaction derives from past accomplishments. Victory in World War II, although 30 years in the past, ranks as the major trial the nation has successfully withstood:

The socialist system proved it is viable and invincible. The Soviet Union became a world power whose international prestige and position could no longer be ignored. Socialism grew into a world system covering vast territory. . . .¹⁶

That victory, the Soviets believe, earned for them the legitimate right to a major share of influence in European affairs generally, and in Germany in particular, as well as to the territorial and political spoils gained in East Europe. This sense of legitimacy, of having *already* paid the price, underlies Soviet

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tenacity over the Berlin issue and European collective security.

There is also a Soviet feeling of satisfaction connected with having weathered the uncertainties and vulnerabilities of the Cold War. By surviving in the crisis-ridden postwar competition with the US without losing the positions gained during the war and by rising to a position of rough equality with the US, the Soviets believe that the USSR has demonstrated a capacity to sustain itself and grow in a dangerous and unpredictable environment. This basic achievement is of considerable importance to a people whose sense of inferiority *vis-à-vis* other great powers and cultures has been great and whose outlook on the world has been marked by extreme suspicion and distrust. It is also important to the regime, whose sense of permanence has always been subject to internal doubts and whose recent reaction to what it interprets as an act of international discrimination (US trade legislation) reflects still-active memories of Western intervention in the Russian Civil War and the lack of US diplomatic recognition until 1933.

Part of the current Soviet mood also is a sense of momentum in the USSR's favor. This is largely a matter of growth, in both economic and international political terms, relative to the US and the West as a whole. A public political lecturer in Leningrad recently told his audience that it was difficult to say which country, the USSR or the US, presently had the most influence on events in today's world.¹⁷ Since the US has long been considered in the USSR to be the world's strongest nation, as well as the chief Soviet adversary, this statement—especially as it was expressed in practical, realistic language—carries immense meaning regarding how far the Soviets believe the USSR has come up in the world. Such an impression in the Soviet mind seems also to validate the concept of a progressive historical march by Moscow, whether this attitude is interpreted in nationalistic or ideological terms: "Capitalism has lost the historical initiative, which has firmly passed to the world system of socialism."¹⁸

There is considerable Soviet national pride involved in these beliefs of "having arrived" and having a sense of forward movement. The image of the Soviet state abroad is felt to have been enhanced by evidence of technological and economic prowess, such as Soviet space feats, and of international political weight, recognized explicitly by the US in publicized summits and official documents. Soviet international prestige is

felt to be based on a more solid footing today than was the case in Khrushchev's day. Bluffing, blustering, and spectacular but incautious political moves are believed now to have aroused rather than impressed adversaries and to have bought little lasting influence in other countries. Concentration on and steady progress in internal and close-to-home development has been stressed under Brezhnev. While major economic tasks (chiefly related to increasing productivity and quality) continue to exist, the Soviet economy is felt now basically to satisfy domestic expectations, albeit on a modest level, and to be a sufficient base for maintaining a strong military capability and an active foreign policy. Much attention has also been directed at better integrating the socialist community in Europe. As a result, in Soviet eyes:

The international position of the socialist community has never been as solid as now. Its authority in the eyes of the peoples of the world has never been so high.¹⁹

Notwithstanding the degree of self-confidence the Soviets derive from a sense of past Soviet accomplishments, from the current problems in the West, or from their advances in strategic capabilities, there remain clouds on the international horizon as viewed from Moscow which circumscribe the scope of actions that might be undertaken to exercise the newfound Soviet weight in world affairs. Chief among these is China, a problem that adversely affects the USSR in several important respects:

- the "loss" of China from the socialist "camp" damaged the USSR's image in the world as the nucleus of an always-increasing political force and fragmented the international Communist movement as an instrument of Soviet foreign policy;

- the Chinese challenge is not only serious but operates on several levels, military and political as well as ideological, and no abatement of it is in sight;

- China is already on the path of better relations with the US and Japan, leaving the USSR the "odd man out" of the Pacific "Quadrilateral;"

- the emergence of China as a third "pole" in international affairs reduces the potential for favorable effects of increased Soviet power.

Other factors in international relations represent ambiguous elements for Moscow that do not now indicate clearly whether they enhance or diminish the prospects for Soviet gains. Economic problems such as the energy "crisis" affect primarily Western states, which are more integrated into the world economic structure, but they also have their effects on the USSR

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and CEMA: "socialist countries are affected by these problems to the extent that they affect our external relations."¹⁴⁰ For example, Soviet leverage in the Middle East is reduced to the extent that Arab states can use the oil issue to pressure the West directly regarding Israel.

These and other problems are substantial ones that inject much uncertainty into any Soviet estimative view of the USSR's international role. Using such problems as a basis, one could construct an image of a world that looks quite risky, even hostile to Moscow. Such a view, if it came to predominate within the Kremlin, could be expected to affect greatly Soviet foreign policy, perhaps bringing about an extreme policy swing.* But the Soviets have dealt with China and other major international problems for some years without adopting extreme views as a total world picture or guide to policy, and there is little reason to believe that from their standpoint the world has recently become significantly more hostile.

Instead, the main recent changes have been the two major factors affecting the international "correlation of forces"—the variety of international and domestic economic problems currently unsettling the West and the emergence of the USSR as the generally accepted strategic equal of the US. The latter is particularly important. If the Soviets have not in fact caught up with the US in strategic military capabilities, they have nonetheless made impressive strides in this direction, especially in nuclear missile strength, and have successfully created in Western minds an image

*Such a view has been expressed in Moscow, but it was used to justify the policy of detente. In the underground journal *Political Diary*, a typescript monthly that was published regularly from Khrushchev's ouster in 1964 until some time in 1971 (and, unlike many other samizdat products, kept secret from Western correspondents) and may well have been read by government and party officials, a writer discusses Soviet foreign policy and argues that the USSR is "again encircled by active or potential enemies." His chief worry is China, and he decries the economic costs of the arms budget made necessary by the dangerous international environment. He criticizes the 1960s policy of trying to deal with China without altering policies toward other areas and suggests that the best Soviet policy would be a gradual relaxation of international tensions, combined with development of a new family of ICBMs—precisely the course that the leadership was then undertaking. He urges that concessions be made on European issues to strengthen the image of the USSR as a responsible great power and to counteract what he sees as growing anti-Soviet sentiment and Moscow's political and moral isolation in the world. A.R., "Notes on Certain Problems in the Foreign Policy of the USSR," *Politicheskoye dnevnik*, No. 67, April 1970, pp. 10-29; available in English, JPRS 1/4160-2, 18 May 1972, pp. 508-527.

of rough equality and continuing vitality. Thus it is not premature to ask how parity may affect—or may already have affected—Soviet attitudes toward the USSR's role in world affairs.

The principal effect seems to have been some lessening of the fears about the possible actions of other states that have preoccupied the Kremlin for much of its existence. Other major powers may not be seen as changing their basically hostile attitudes toward the USSR and potential international threats such as nuclear proliferation are not resolved, but these problems can be faced by Moscow with more confidence about the capacity of the USSR to deal with them and with less exaggerated concern for their effects on Soviet security and interests. The USSR need no longer feel so strongly that it is inferior or an outsider in world politics. Since insecurity has been a major factor motivating past Soviet policies, the emergence of a new psychological mood might well be expected to lead to new policies. This may already have occurred with the Soviet adoption of detente as the main theme of USSR foreign policy.

There is no necessary logical connection between parity and detente such that the former should bring about the latter. Greater Soviet capabilities could be expected to lead, after all, to more assertive, demanding behavior. But if Soviet blustering over Berlin, pointed assertions of entirely adequate defenses, deception regarding missile programs, and overblown expectations of rapid advance in various areas or countries were in reality motivated in large part by a Soviet sense of defensiveness and insecurity, then a logical policy concomitant of increased capabilities and self-confidence could well be a policy of more active international involvement with less need for the old defense mechanisms.

Even if increased self-confidence has been an important factor underlying changed Soviet perceptions of the world and of appropriate Soviet policies, some of the old suspicions and sense of external threat remain. In the same conference for Soviet officials abroad in which Ponomarev stressed the growth of Soviet influence in the world, Suslov spoke strongly on the theme of vigilance.¹⁴¹ Patterns of thinking and attitudes from the past are not easily surrendered.

More fundamentally, Soviet feelings of inferiority and insecurity deriving from Moscow's perception of other states and of the current balance of power are

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not the only determinants of the USSR's foreign policy. The domestic roots of foreign policy are many and deep. The overall Soviet interpretation of politics in general as a process of conflict prepares all Soviet leaders to expect anti-Soviet motives to play an important part in the formation of other countries' policies. From the beginning the survival of the Soviet regime was expected to depend to a great extent on Communist success elsewhere. The continued relative lack of such success means that major potential threats to Soviet security remain in the world, even for a newly confident Soviet generation. In addition, the same ideological goals and justifications that the regime uses to sustain itself and its role domestically still affect Soviet thinking about foreign policy.

Such factors lie at the root of the difference between the Western and Soviet views of detente. The West seeks assurance that the USSR will give up the goals of advancing direct Soviet political influence in other countries and open Soviet society to what are regarded in the West as normal peaceful relations with other countries. International detente, it is hoped, will then become in effect the ultimate goal of Soviet policy. The Soviets, on the other hand, see detente as a means of making the world safer for the USSR and of expanding Soviet influence. Lenin is sometimes quoted to this effect: "any peace opens a hundred times greater and wider the path for our influence."¹⁴²

The apparent unity of leadership support for the 1971 "peace program" has been impressive, all the more so because detente seems to impose some restraints and costs on Soviet foreign policy. Detente is viewed more as the best way to permit the maturing of conditions that will further Soviet influence abroad than as a direct instrument of Soviet action. It thus implies a high degree of patience on the part of the USSR (e.g. in Portugal). Slower (and, for Moscow, hopefully surer) advances are accepted and expectations are more modest than was the case under Khrushchev. Paradoxically, the USSR expected more

and ran greater risks then, although at a clearer disadvantage strategically *vis-à-vis* the US, than has more recently been the case under the cautious Brezhnev, despite the emergence of near parity. In broad terms, the Soviets might be said to have profited from international experiences in learning that rapid advances in peacetime are seldom possible and that working largely within the existing international system is more likely to serve Soviet interests than frontal challenges to other states or to the system itself.

There is also a certain open-ended quality to the Soviet detente policy. The eventual victory of "socialism" may still be assumed by the Soviets as historically determined. But detente with its gradualist approach and uncertain implications for Soviet society itself, can scarcely be viewed as a sure path to success. Its ultimate consequences simply cannot be foretold with assurance. Success in fostering an atmosphere of relaxed tensions will not, in itself, bring about a dramatic reordering of the globe in the Soviet favor (despite Soviet rhetoric about the "fundamental restructuring of international relations"). Even if achieved, it will be cause for satisfaction, not triumph.

Planning for and managing the Soviet role in international life in the 1970s is, in the favorite Soviet word, a "complex" task. Moscow's perception of the world as enemy is changing; but it has not been replaced by one of the world as oyster. Although the Western countries are experiencing serious economic and political strains internally and internationally, the USSR can see no readily apparent way to exploit current possible targets of opportunity without at the same time running the risk of galvanizing Western will and unity and reviving an East-West confrontation. In the face of these conditions the Soviets have so far been realists and recognized that things cannot be changed quickly, and they have therefore come to accept the prospect of an indefinite period of coexistence with the West.

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